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How Charter School Leadership Is Related to Teacher Motivation

Dissertation

Bradley P. Tipka

University of St. Thomas

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This dissertation is the culmination of an exciting journey through my schooling in many ways, and I am grateful to all of those who I have worked with, struggled with, collaborated with, and who have supported me through the process. I appreciate the support and guidance of all of my colleagues, friends and family.

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I was inspired to start work on the doctorate program by meeting some colleagues in my principal program who were in the doctorate program. When I heard Jon Peterson, who was in the doctorate program, talking about the ‘regime of truth’ and the ‘apparatus of power’ from his coursework on Michel Foucault in my principal’s program courses, it certainly piqued my curiosity to continue from the principal license program toward the doctorate. Also, my first professor in the principal licensure program, Dr. Tom Fish, had a major impact on my decision to pursue a doctorate, and I appreciate his encouragement.

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provided me with detailed and timely feedback without returning the favor of procrastination. I could not have completed this dissertation without all your support, guidance and feedback. I hope I can provide you all the same support you provided me in the future.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological research study investigated the experiences of teachers and leaders in urban charter schools and how these experiences affected teacher motivation. The term teacher motivation was used with both leaders and teachers in this study. The purpose of this study was to better understand how charter school teachers and leaders experience their work and how charter schools can address issues related to teacher and leader turnover, which has plagued many charter schools since the charter school reform movement started. I interviewed 12 teachers and six school leaders from one metropolitan region in the Midwestern United States. My research questions focused on the main factors that make concept of teacher motivation in charter schools unique, the ways leaders intentionally create conditions and respond to challenges to maintain a motivated teaching force, factors that lead to high rates of turnover in charter schools and how the maturation and development of charter schools as a reform is affecting teacher motivation in charter schools.

The findings from this study showed a high degree of diversity in charter schools and demographics as well as in educational practice. Many teachers and leaders had emotional reasons for choosing to work in charter schools that included feeling part of a smaller educational environment and wanting to be part of the unique culture of the school. Teachers and leaders also largely appreciated what they found to be less bureaucracy and more leadership opportunities in charter schools today. Many leaders and teachers also found a spirit of innovation that, while they often enjoyed their work, could also present challenges for having to continually be innovative. Teachers and leader were motivated by a sense of community, innovation, leadership support, less bureaucracy, and having a voice in the leadership of the school. One of the recommendations I have for future research is to study what makes charter

schools unique today because many of the teachers' comments about motivation seemed to be best practices no matter what type of school in which one is working.

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

HOW CHARTER SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IS RELATED TO TEACHER MOTIVATION

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When I returned from eight years of teaching overseas in Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and New Zealand, I was excited to find a job in a large urban school district in the US. I had some leadership experience along with my teaching experience overseas, was an undergraduate English Language Arts major with English as a Second Language minor, and thought teaching in a large district might afford me opportunities to teach some different subjects and possibly move into a leadership role. After I returned from overseas, my first position was a summer school Language Arts teacher for students who needed credit recovery in a large urban district in Minnesota. I loved the students and would have been happy to stay on there as a teacher. However, while that district was interested in interviewing me and as a teacher who needed a job for the Fall, I kept interviewing wherever I had offers and found a job at an urban charter school with a mission that focused on a specific cultural group.

At the time, I had no idea what charter schools were. I had no idea why they were formed, what the politics behind them were, and what the charter school movement's intentions were. However, to be able to teach students who were largely born in another country and who were ESL students seemed like a great fit for me as an ESL teacher who was just returning from overseas.

Since that first position at that middle school, I have had many positions in four different charter schools including middle school Language Arts teacher, charter school board member at two different schools, instructional coach, dean of students, district assessment coordinator, professional learning community lead, lead teacher, and director of two charter schools. These experiences provided me with a wide range of experiences and have made me a supporter of

charter schools but also someone who believes charter schools need to address some areas to maintain the power of the reform. Some things that I think need to be addressed are retaining quality teachers, maintaining innovation and limiting bureaucracy, and supporting the mission on which the school was formed. I have experienced how some things can become challenging as charter schools grow and become larger. I have also observed how charter school authorizers and state accountability systems can collide with innovation in charter schools and create bureaucratic systems that may inhibit innovation. I have also seen how many charter schools resemble traditional districts and may aspire to be like a large public district.

I have observed some of the power of communities creating new schooling options with localized control, and I have also witnessed some drawbacks or challenges with charter schools. I have been non-renewed twice from charter schools and, in both cases, I had no advance warning, no improvement plans or anything that would indicate I was not going to be renewed for another year. However, that is part of the bargain we accept as charter school teachers or leaders: we may be non-renewed at any time without any warning. Most charter schools work under one-year employment agreements which often say something like “the school can terminate the employee at any time for any reason or no reason at all.” Certainly, this notion of temporary employment can be challenging and lead to stress each year when it is time to renew. I have also experienced high levels of staff turnover which negatively affected my motivation when I saw valued colleagues and friends leaving the charter school where we worked.

While I wasn’t aware of why charter schools existed or what charter schools founding principles were, I have since learned more about the movement through this research as well as my experience. This research is my work to understand how teachers are experiencing charter

schools currently in the hopes that charter schools can continue to learn to be better schools and continue to provide options for students and parents who choose them.

How Charter School Leadership Is Related to Teacher Motivation

Charter schools are experiencing an explosion in popularity and are one of the fastest growing movements in current education reform. Hays (2013) stated, “As of October 2009, 4578 charter public schools serve 1,407,421 students in 40 states and the District of Columbia” (p. 38). Charter schools are politically popular with the major political parties in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation as well the *Race to the Top* legislation and receive high levels of political and financial support from many large foundations such as the Gates Foundation and the Walton Foundation (Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Hays, 2013; Henwood & Featherstone, 2013; Nathan, 1998). With this momentum, there is an urgent need to research the efficacy of charter schools and determine whether charter schools are succeeding in their mission and are a sustainable educational reform.

Since the first charter school opened in 1991 in Minnesota, the charter school movement has remained popular and the number of charter schools continue to expand. The movement started with the goal of providing parents and communities more opportunities for choice and control over their children's education. For some communities, this was a reaction to failing schools while other communities wanted to create schools that were more localized, cultural, or had unique academic missions. For example, Minnesota has schools that have a science and technology focus, an expeditionary learning focus, an East African cultural focus, a female student focus, an environmental focus, and a performing arts focus.

With the rapid growth of charter schools, there have been some growing pains. The rapid growth has led to charter school management organizations that control and govern many schools in their network. One of the largest charter school networks, the Knowledge is Power Program or KIPP, states on its website homepage that they have 141 schools from coast to coast. Some people in the charter school community worry that these large charter school networks threaten to reinstate bureaucratic and centralized control of schools that led to the charter school movement in the first place (Ableidinger & Hassel, 2010).

Through laws that allow parents, teachers and community groups to form schools, charter schools were seen as smaller schools free from the public school bureaucracy, promised more autonomy to teachers and leaders, and offered parents a choice in free public education. However, in exchange for more autonomy and freedom, charter schools are held accountable for producing results. If a school does not produce results within 3-5 years, the school may not be reauthorized and will have to close. Therefore, the context of charter schools encourages a competitive, fast-paced environment. In current charter school discussions, words like 'highly successful', 'no excuses', 'a sense of urgency', and 'achievement first' are common phrases. The sense of urgency is not only for student achievement but also for the simple viability and sustainability of the school. In this context, these concepts can have dramatic effects on teacher motivation.

While the charter school movement is relatively new, educational researchers are beginning to see the need for extensive research into this growing movement. Much of the existing research is focused around the major concepts in charter schooling of leader and teacher autonomy, different types of accountability and its effects on leadership and teaching, choice and competition among public schools, student achievement in charter schools, charter school

management organizations, charter schools and social justice and teacher conditions, and job satisfaction in charter schools.

If charter schools are going to remain a sustainable component of education, the issue of teacher job satisfaction needs to be investigated. The tension many charter schools face is retaining quality teachers when the expectations and hours can be high for many charter school teachers (Blitz, 2011; Henwood & Featherstone, 2013). Also, with most charter school teachers on at-will, non-union contracts, at what point will teachers choose the job security at a traditional school versus supporting the mission of a charter school? In fact, research by Yeh (2013) discusses how scaling up successful charter school models will be challenging because it will be difficult to find enough quality teachers to staff these schools. Again, if the 'highly successful' model of charter schools is not able to retain quality teachers, structures of charter schools will need to be investigated in greater depth.

Teacher motivation affects teachers in all educational contexts. Because charter schools have unique qualities that may include a smaller school setting, more autonomy in the classroom, intense accountability standards, a unique cultural focus, teacher motivation in a charter school context is an important aspect. For example, many educators would agree that their primary motivation to be a teacher is to work with students and see students learning. As a promise of the movement, charter schools were expected to offer teachers more autonomy in instruction. Therefore, the question is what aspects of autonomy do charter school teachers find motivating and how do teachers experience autonomy in charter schools? There are numerous articles that question whether external accountability demands, such as state testing, may limit the autonomy of charter school teachers. Some authors propose that teachers actually experience more

autonomy in traditional public schools compared to charter schools (Crawford, 2001). With these questions, how can charter school leaders support autonomy that teachers find motivating?

In addition to autonomy, charter schools are held accountable to state and authorizer standards. Teachers in all milieu know they must produce results that demonstrate this success. One effect of accountability may be a loss of autonomy or a loss of the ability to innovate when a charter school has not shown success on recent accountability measures. These accountability pressures can lead to a higher sense of urgency, more top down pressure to succeed from leadership, and even a loss of teaching position if a teacher's students do not show growth. For charter schools to continue to grow and succeed, we need to understand how to incorporate accountability demands in a way that charter school teachers will find motivating.

Another major area where teacher motivation and charter school leadership needs to be studied in greater depth is competition between and among charter schools, traditional public schools and private schools. While there has been school choice in a limited form for many years, charter schools have greatly expanded this marketplace in many regions. Now, parents in some cities may have many free schooling choices within their neighborhoods. Therefore, schools must be responsive to the market and the demands of the community. Also, with the recent test-based accountability standards, all schools are expected to show positive test scores as part of their marketing strategies. One way the market affects charter school teachers in the classroom is that school leaders may fear upsetting parents and allow disruptive student behaviors to continue. For example, teachers may not feel supported when students are behaving negatively because the school needs the students to maintain enrollment. Also, when a school is not performing academically, teachers may be affected by an increased workload, more accountability and reporting demands, and a loss of a job if standards are not met. These are

issues that charter schools need to address from the standpoint of how to keep teachers motivated and what leaders can do to support that motivation.

For many charter school teachers, charter schools are known as *starter schools*. Charter schools are frequently a great place to start a teaching career and get experience before transitioning to a higher salaried, more secure, traditional public school position. Teacher turnover is a major issue in charter schools, and an issue that impacts all charter schools whether they are considered highly successful or not. For example, as Henwood and Featherstone (2013) state, “A study by David Stuit and Thomas Smith of Vanderbilt shows that teachers at charter schools were almost twice as likely to quit their jobs as teachers at traditional public schools-and twice as likely to leave teaching entirely” (p. 61). Therefore, if charter schools are going to remain a sustainable component of current education reform, the issue of teacher job satisfaction needs to be addressed. The tension many charter schools face is retaining quality teachers when the student achievement expectations and work hours can be high for charter school teachers (Blitz, 2011; Henwood & Featherstone, 2013). Also, with most charter school teachers on an at-will, non-union contracts, teachers must choose between the job security at a traditional public school versus supporting the mission of a charter school. Again, if the *highly successful* model of charter schools is not able to retain quality teachers, they face major issues of sustainability in the future (Yeh, 2013). For leaders and teachers in charter schools, maintaining a motivated teaching force is essential to the school’s retention of successful teachers.

In addition to autonomy, charter schools are held accountable to state and authorizer standards. Again, we assume all teachers want their students to learn and show success, and that teachers know they must produce results that demonstrate success. However, one possible effect of state and authorizer accountability mechanisms may be a loss of autonomy or the ability to

innovate when a charter school has not showed success on recent accountability measures. This can lead to a higher sense of urgency, more top down pressure from leadership to succeed and even a loss of a teaching position if a teacher's students do not show growth. For charter schools to continue to grow and succeed, we must understand how leaders incorporate accountability demands in ways that teachers find motivating and sustainable.

In conclusion, there are challenges of leadership that have unique applicability to charter schools and charter school leadership. The emerging field of charter school leadership needs to be researched in more depth to better understand the shared experiences of charter school teachers and leaders. Whether a charter school is part of a large network or an independent school, teachers and leaders face unique challenges, such as low job security, an expanding marketplace for students, increased accountability and time frames to show success, and a potentially increasing bureaucracy and its effects in teacher and leader autonomy. Further, in this context, we need to get a better understanding of how the guiding principles of charter schools affect a teacher's motivation to teach and how leaders need to support teachers. With the large number of students who are impacted, there is an urgent need to better understand how teachers and leaders can both remain motivated in this context and remain passionate about educating students.

Statement of the Problem

The world of charter school reform seems to be in a state of hyper intensive change. While one of the original intentions of charter schools was to be free from bureaucracy and allow for innovation, the direction in which many charter schools are moving may surprise some of the original founders. Most likely the original proponents of charter school legislation did not imagine a charter school organization that would have 140 charter school franchises across the

United States with centralized leadership policies. The original founders of charter school legislation most likely did not foresee how standardized testing would impact charter schools. However, some of these things are part of the current world of charter school reform. Innovation works in many ways and, like motivation, is a multifaceted construct that needs to be researched in this context. Therefore, for charter schools to continue to be a powerful and an empowering educational option for parents and students, further research needs to be done on how leaders and teachers interact in this context to have a highly motivated teaching force. The purpose of my research will be to better understand how charter school leaders motivate teachers. I will ask charter school leaders how they think about teacher motivation and ask teachers about how they experience teacher motivation in charter schools.

Research Questions

My research was guided by these research questions:

What are the main factors that make the concept of teacher motivation unique in charter schools?

How do leaders intentionally create conditions and respond to challenges in charter schools to maintain a motivated teaching force?

What are some of the factors that lead to high rates of teacher turnover in charter schools?

How is the maturation and development of charter schools as a reform affecting teacher motivation?

In conclusion, this research was driven by an attempt to understand where charter schools are as a reform, where they seem to be going and how this affects teacher motivation. From the review of research, I learned about how charter schools work with state accountability demands as well as some diverse issues in charter school leadership such as a leader's racial mismatch with the demographics of the school. The research base is rapidly growing but I was not able to find any articles that related directly to charter school teacher and leader motivation in the

current context. From my interviews, I learned how diverse charter schools and charter school teacher's and leader's experiences in charter schools are. I also learned about some of the concepts leaders and teachers have in common such as demographic concerns, relating to the mission, differing perspectives on leadership and charter school teacher motivation. It is my hope that this research continues and facilitates the discussion around charter schools in pursuit of best practices for students, families, and teachers.

Definition of Terms

Affective Labor – The emotional experiences people experience in their work.

Charter Schools – Schools that receive public funding but operate outside the school district in which they are located.

Charter School Accountability – The expectations and standards are held accountable by the state and the charter school's authorizer.

Charter School Authorizers – Organizations that provide guidance and oversight to charter schools and hold charter schools accountable to the state they operate in.

Charter School Management Organizations – For profit or non-profit organizations that manage numerous charter schools.

McDonaldization – A term used by George Ritzer that refers to taking successful models and franchising them, essentially using the development strategy of a fast food restaurant.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – A United States law, enacted in 2001, which increased measurable accountability standards for public schools. The law also supported school choice and charter school.

Race to the Top – A US Department of Education grant enacted in 2009 which rewards innovative approaches to public education and also supports the development of charter schools.

Teacher Autonomy – A teacher's control of curriculum and educational decisions in the classroom.

Teacher Efficacy – A teachers' belief about their ability to have an impact on student learning.

Weber's Theory of Rationalization – Max Weber's sociological theory of how traditional societies become modern and bureaucracies form by replacing traditional and emotional thought with reason and practicality.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As charter schools are a relatively new reform movement, the research is still developing, and this chapter will review some current literature regarding charter schools and teacher motivation, identify some potential gaps in the literature, identify some of Max Weber's theories as a theoretical lens and identify some areas of challenge for the growth and development of the charter school movement.

The Maturation of Charter Schools

In 1991, when the first charter school opened in Minnesota, charter schools were seen as an alternative to traditional public schools (House, 2005). Charter schools were given more autonomy in exchange for greater accountability (Ableidinger & Hassel, 2010; Blitz, 2010; Finnigan, 2007; House, 2005; Toma & Zimmer, 2012). Charter schools were created with the promise of more autonomy for leaders and teachers in the school (Renzulli, Macpherson Parrott, & Beattie, 2011). The assumption was that freeing educators from bureaucratic demands would lead to higher achievement as well as higher levels of innovation (Cannata, 2007; Dressler, 2001; Ndoye, Imig & Parker, 2010; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). As Fabricant and Fine (2012) stated, "Teachers sought to create small, engaging educational settings within low-income communities where children of poverty, of color, and immigrants could be educated well, cared for, and nurtured academically" (p. 2). The first charters that opened were organized by parents, teachers, or community organizations and many had unique cultural, community or curricular foci. Initially, charter schools were seen as educational alternatives that empowered communities to form and operate schools they deemed as more effective or more desirable than the traditional public schools (Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Hays, 2013; House, 2005).

Politically, charters are popular with both major political parties and are seen as an option to vouchers in the school choice debate. From President Clinton, who advocated for charter schools, to the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* as well as the *Race to the Top* legislation, charters are seen as a driver of educational reform (Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Henwood & Featherstone, 2013; Nathan, 1998). With the implementation of *NCLB*, school competition became more immediate and introduced the major principles of competition and choice in public education (Fabricant & Fine, 2012). In the case of *NCLB*, charters were primarily accountable for higher standardized test scores and mentioned as a reform in competition with traditional public schools. Additionally, with the Obama Administration's *Race to the Top* initiative, charter schools received strong support because the law required states to lift their cap on the new charter schools in order to receive *Race to the Top* funding (Fabricant & Fine, 2007).

Fabricant and Fine (2007) describe how the charter school movement has had a major change in philosophy and implementation in the last twenty years. Initially, charter schools were seen as individual schools that were coming from a social justice foundation by empowering communities to form schools that met their needs. Charter school reform was a reaction against the bureaucratic systems of the large factory model of education, meaning that public school districts were viewed as unresponsive to some community needs. Charter schools were seen as schools that could innovate and use experimental approaches (Fabricant & Fine, 2007; Grahame, 2008). Fabricant and Fine (2007) state that:

[The charter school movement in the 1990s was] organized to promote an ambitious alternative to public schools. More to the point, charter movement ideology veered to the right politically. The politics increasingly emphasized charter schooling as an alternative to public education, identified teachers and their unions as primary culprits in the 'decline' of academic achievement. (p. 19)

Further, with the growth of Education Management Organizations (EMOs), Charter Management Organizations and national educational chains, charter schools are increasingly being *scaled up* and franchised once a successful model has been found or endorsed (Tolson, 2011). According to Tolson (2011) “Statistics are shared showing a 420% increase in the number of EMOs over the past 11 years as well as the Obama administration’s commitment to choice and entrepreneurship in education” (p. 658). Large foundations, such as the Gates Foundation, Walton Foundation, and the Broad Foundation, support many of these schools (Briscoe, 2012; Fabricant & Fine, 2007; Marsh, Hamilton & Gill, 2008; Tolson, 2011; Yeh, 2013).

Teacher Motivation

Because charter schools have some unique qualities that may include a smaller school setting, more autonomy in the classroom, intense accountability standards, and a unique cultural focus, teacher motivation in a charter school context is something that needs to be further researched. As a promise of educational reform, charter schools were expected to offer teachers more autonomy in instruction. The question is what aspects of autonomy do charter school teachers find motivating and how do teachers experience autonomy in charter schools? Additionally, there are also numerous articles that discuss whether external accountability demands, such as state testing, limit the autonomy of charter school teachers (Blitz, 2011; Crawford, 2001; Kostogriz, 2012). Considering these questions and that charter school reform originally offered the promise of more autonomy, the issue that needs further exploration is how charter school leaders can support teacher autonomy in ways that teachers find motivating.

While there is not much research directly related to teacher motivation in charter schools, teacher motivation has been studied in other contexts. One issue affecting teacher motivation in

any context is teacher efficacy. Ahmad (2011) researched the concept of teacher efficacy and how this interplays with teacher task motivation. *Teacher efficacy* was defined as the teachers' beliefs about having an impact on student learning (Ahmad, 2011). While not contextualized to charter schools, Ahmad (2011) made a distinction between *Teaching Efficacy*, or competence, and *Personal Efficacy*, or confidence. His survey study found that 227 high school teachers who reported high levels on teaching efficacy and personal efficacy had higher levels of task motivation. Ahmad's research also showed that teacher's belief in his or her ability to raise student achievement is associated with higher levels of teacher motivation.

Additionally, when considering teacher motivation and efficacy, Grahame (2008) noted that the *at risk* label is often applied to students who are drawn to alternative schools and charter schools. However, *at risk* is a label that places the burden of change entirely on the *at risk* individual or individual's family and does not implicate society for these *at risk* students. Therefore, teachers can lose motivation when working with at risk students who may not be showing growth and where the teacher may not be able affect the individual or individual's family.

Another dynamic of teacher motivation analyzed by Kostogriz (2012) are the affective factors involved in a teacher's labor and how models of accountability impact them. Set in Australian secondary schools, Kostogriz (2012) researched this concept through teacher interviews and how the standards-based accountability movement can be in conflict with teachers' value over their affective labor. Kostogriz (2012) stated, "Affective labor injects social life in education. It creates possibilities through social connections that play an important role in both teaching and learning" (p. 410). The tension discussed is that a teacher's notion of care, community, and social life is often in conflict with standards-based accountability measures and

neo-liberal reforms (Kostogriz, 2012). For charter school teachers, the tension between accountability and affective factors in teaching are intensified with the lack of job security, as well as the reality of the school facing sanctions or closure after 3-5 years of poor academic achievement results. Additionally, the promise of innovative approaches to education which may appeal to a teacher's affective enjoyment of teaching may, in fact, be limited by external accountability from the state or authorizer (Grahame, 2008). While teacher's affective factors have been researched, there needs to be more research on how charter school teacher's affective factors are related to sustaining teacher motivation.

In House's (2005) dissertation on the motivation that leads staff to charter schools, she conducted a qualitative case study that included teacher interviews, and researched several factors of a teacher's job satisfaction in charter schools. House (2005) stated, "Teachers report going to work in charter schools for a variety of reasons, including more freedom and flexibility, family teaching and learning atmosphere, increased decision making, dedicated staff, and enhanced accountability" (p. 16). One aspect reported by 41% of the teachers in the study was that teachers in a charter school often felt overwhelmed. The study also reported that issues such as lack of support for behavior concerns, limited resources, added responsibility, and longer hours and school days all negatively impact job satisfaction. Conversely, the House (2005) study indicated factors that positively affected a teacher's job satisfaction in charter schools which included being in a school with a clear mission, having a family-like atmosphere, and wanting to work with specific populations.

Performance or merit pay is another area of research that is attracting attention as a method to motivate teachers (Ritter & Jensen, 2007; Yeh, 2013). Ritter and Jensen (2007) mentioned one issue affecting many traditional districts that implemented a merit pay program

was opposition from teacher groups and, thus, early termination of the program. This is less of an issue in charter schools, which usually do not have large teacher groups or unions (Preston et al., 2012; Stuit & Smith, 2012). Ritter and Jensen pointed out four characteristics of performance pay programs that were potentially motivating to teachers. These include that the amount of performance pay was substantial; it was perceived as fair and attainable; it looked for growth; and was compatible with the mission of the school (2007). Yeh (2013) stated, “In fact, a central claim of market-oriented reformers is that the use of merit pay and the practice of retaining teachers on the basis of student learning gains might attract a more talented pool of individuals to the teaching profession” (p. 13).

Charter School Innovation

One of the factors that leads many teachers to choose to work in charter schools is charter schools’ promise to be more innovative than traditional public schools (House, 2005; Lubienski, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). However, some research shows that charters are not living up to their promise of being and allowing for educational entrepreneurialism and innovation (Lubienski, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). For example, Lubienski (2003) suggested that choice and competition may actually inhibit innovation by forcing schools to compete. If a school takes a chance on an innovative approach, but the market forces say the school is not successful; the school may be propelled toward more traditional curriculum and instruction (Lubienski, 2003). Another possible explanation for the lack of innovation in charter schools is that teachers and administrators may be less experienced and less able to innovate (Grahame, 2008). Based on the lack of research, innovation as an aspect of teacher motivation in charter schools needs to be researched further.

Other articles note the term innovation can have many different meanings in a charter school context. For example, Lubienski (2003) noted that in many charters there was a move toward standardization which, in many cases, the innovation was a *back to the basics* or *core knowledge* approach. Based on an analysis of literature about innovation in charter schools, Lubienski suggests that the innovation found in charter schools appears to be focused more on organizational and administrative practices rather than teaching practices. Additionally, Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata (2012) found that while charter schools offer the promise of innovation, the main area where they appear to be innovative is the lack of teacher tenure and also in organizational efficiency (Preston et al., 2012). Further, in addition to a lack of tenure, charter schools may be innovating by treating teaching as a short-term career instead of a long-term profession (Rich, 2013). Innovation is a founding premise of charter school reforms; however, and this may be an important concept in teacher motivation in charter schools.

Teacher Retention

Retaining a highly motivated teaching force is a major topic in the current literature on charter schools (Renzulli, Macpherson Parrott & Beattie, 2011; Rich, 2013; Stuit & Smith, 2012; Yeh, 2013). Many charter schools have had to confront high teacher turnover. The longer hours and high demands of the job lead to turnover on account of the competition and short life cycles of many charter schools. For a charter school, 3-5 years of poor academic performance can lead to school closure, adding to a teacher's sense of urgency, stress and potentially burnout (Yeh, 2013).

An additional factor in teacher turnover, according to an analysis of teacher survey data by Renzulli, Macpherson and Beattie (2011), is a racial mismatch between student and teacher, suggesting that a White teacher teaching primarily Black students may play a role in teacher

turnover. However, the Renzulli et al. study notes that teachers in many schools are racially mismatched, and that White teachers in primarily minority charter schools showed higher levels of satisfaction than White teachers in primarily minority traditional public schools. Renzulli et al. (2011), note that having a higher number of minority students in traditional public schools may lead to teacher perceptions of a lower quality school, and, thus, lead to lower levels of job satisfaction. According to Renzulli et al. (2011), organizations that allow more autonomy produce higher levels of job satisfaction for teachers who are of a different race than their students. The authors postulate that what may be driving the White teachers to feel less job satisfaction is really attitudes of white privilege and stereotypes about students, mostly Black students, whom they perceive as lower in ability. What may differentiate the charter school experience and job satisfaction is that teachers may align themselves with the mission of a charter school or the cultural group that is primarily being served by that school and feel more job satisfaction even when there is a racial mismatch (Renzulli, et al., 2011).

Stuit and Smith (2012) conducted quantitative research to compare turnover rates between public and charter school teachers and found that from 2003 to 2004 the teacher turnover rates were almost twice as high for charter schools. One factor cited as the reason for this is that charter school teachers may be seeking a first position and are more likely to be unaware of their desired teaching environment. In addition, teacher's lack of tenure; teacher's lack of union job protection; teachers being Teach for America volunteers on a two-year assignment; teachers have a higher workload and have a less established curriculum; or the charter school itself being in a state of early existence with massive turnover; or innovation may all affect teacher turnover (Stuit & Smith, 2012). Charter school teachers frequently cited the reason for leaving was compensation, recognizing that traditional public schools tend to have

higher rates of compensation than charter schools. Stuit and Smith (2012) conclude their discussion by saying that this issue needs to be researched more to see if the attrition rate has improved since 2003-2004, and to determine if there is a positive correlation between teacher retention and student achievement.

One of the recent developments in current charter school reform is the idea of *scaling up* or the *McDonaldization* of charter schools which may have an impact on teacher turnover. The concept refers to taking successful models of schools, branching out from their original location, and creating networks or franchises. We have seen this movement proliferate in the last ten years with charter school organizations, such as KIPP, Uncommon Schools, and Edison Schools Network (Toson, 2011). Yeh (2013) researched two charter schools that are considered highly successful, and he suggests that more research is needed before these models are adopted for large scaling up. The main issue Yeh (2013) found with scaling up these two models is the high level of teacher attrition. The longer hours and intense accountability practices are unsustainable for many teachers, and the salaries are not commensurate with the higher demands of the work (Yeh, 2013). Clearly, teacher retention and attrition in charter schools needs to be addressed if charter schools are going to be able to continue to grow and succeed.

Autonomy in Charter Schools

In addition to offering teachers more autonomy in the classroom, charter schools can provide more leadership autonomy and freedom from the bureaucratic demands of a traditional public school district. Hays (2013) conducted a qualitative study in which four site-based charter school leaders were interviewed. He found that leadership was closely associated with closing the achievement gap. According to the study, the three main areas of focus that resulted in a narrowing of the achievement gap were: (a) students' high expectations for college, (b) a safe

and orderly learning environment, and (c) an all school adherence to leadership's vision and the mission of the school. In addition to these areas of focus, Hays found that these schools relied on strong missions combined with strong site-based leadership. He found that even though the four schools had similar dynamics, the leadership styles were all unique and that this difference in leadership styles as well as the leader's autonomy appeared to have an impact on the success of the schools.

In addition to leader and school board autonomy, charter schools may offer teachers greater autonomy. However, Crawford (2001), in comparative survey study, found no difference in teacher's perceptions of autonomy between charter school teachers and traditional public school teachers. Additionally, the author found that teachers in traditional public schools actually had more decision-making power than those in charter schools. This study points to the paradox facing many charter schools in which the state and federal accountability measures may impede the promise of greater autonomy (Finnegan, 2007; Gawlik, 2007). Indeed Gawlik (2007) found that teachers' perceptions of increased accountability were associated with decreases in autonomy. Finnegan (2007) noted that schools with high levels of autonomy do not necessarily mean that individual teachers have high levels of autonomy. Finnegan also noted that autonomy is limited by its accountability demands from the charter school's authorizer. Both Finnegan and Gawlik note that the presumption of greater charter school autonomy may not be manifesting itself in practice.

Teacher Alienation

Another factor affecting teacher motivation and turnover in charter schools is teacher alienation. In a two-year case study in a single high school, Brooks, Hughes and Brooks (2008) looked at teacher alienation and used Melvin Seeman's sociological framework of alienation to

analyze the concept. The concepts the researchers used to frame their study of alienation are powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and estrangement. Brooks et al. noted how many school reforms start with top-down initiatives and how this affects a teacher's sense of alienation. The authors investigated how all teachers experience alienation and found that some teachers enjoy their relative isolation and freedom from collaboration. They concluded that alienation is a diverse concept that may be accelerated and affected by school reform. Kostogriz (2012) also noted that current accountability practices and standards-based reform can lead to alienation in teachers. Both studies note how educational reforms can lead to teacher alienation. This has implications for charter schools because they were developed as a major educational reform.

Charter School Accountability

Another driving force which affects charter school leadership and teacher motivation is that charter schools are held to high standards of state and authorizer accountability. Charter schools are held accountable to locally elected or appointed charter school boards, and the authorizer who provides additional oversight. In relation to charter school accountability, Ableidinger and Hassel (2010) interviewed school leaders and noted how a leader's autonomy was seen as critical to achieving high standards of accountability. Other researchers have examined accountability to national standards and question how those standards affect a charter school's ability to remain innovative and to deliver the services to their unique populations (Gawlik, 2008; Kostogriz, 2012).

Through interviews with 18 charter school leaders and community leaders, Blitz (2011) researched how charter school leaders balance the tension between market-based accountability demands with the authorizer-based accountability demands. In this context, market-based

demands are the demands by the parents and the community, or customers, and the authorizer-based demands are the state accountability measures such as the state assessments. In many ways, the freedom from bureaucracy and the freedom to design localized systems of accountability represent the *ideal*, while the *reality* is that charter schools operate in the same system of accountability as traditional public schools. In Blitz's (2011) study, he states that the heads of school all felt primarily accountable to the mission of the school (market-based), but understood that the authorizer and state have a major impact on the sustainability of the school through the results of school assessment.

The Market Theory of Charter Schooling

One of the driving forces in charter school reform is the market theory, meaning that choice will lead to competition which will, in turn, lead to higher performance of charter schools when compared to the performance of students in traditional public schools (Henwood, & Featherstone, 2013). Recent *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* legislation has led to competition for all schools, which many feel is eroding the power of charter schools to be the leaders in innovation that many reformers envisioned. This customer-driven philosophy is a business-oriented idea and supported by large foundations and leaders in the business community, such as Mayor Bloomberg of New York City and the Gates Foundation (Henwood & Featherstone, 2013). According to a case study of a single charter school by Grahame (2008), minority communities should be careful in assuming charter schools will respond well to the market theory. Grahame (2008) states, "The existing research suggests that minority communities and policy makers should be cautious about looking to the market to ensure that 'no child is left behind'. In the absence of the structural supports needed to facilitate it, choice may be an empty concept" (p. 40). While offering the promise of school choice as a reform, the

research is still unclear whether charter schools are, in fact, providing equitable choice for all families.

Charter School Leadership

Some research is starting to look at what makes leading charter schools unique. The position of school principal is traditionally viewed as primarily an instructional leadership role; however, in charter schools, being a school leader includes many other activities, such as recruiting, facilities management, and financial management that takes away from the ability of charter school leaders to spend time on instructional practices. Carpenter and Peak (2013) found that charter school leaders see themselves in various roles. Two factors that the charter leaders in their study felt confident about were fostering a safe environment and promoting high standards. Conversely, the two areas charter school leaders felt less confident about were leading math and literacy instruction and engaging parents in the common mission of the school. The authors report that charter school leaders wanted to spend more time motivating teachers and providing instructional leadership, which illustrates a discrepancy between the desire of principals to spend their time in those areas versus how they actually spent their time (Carpenter & Peak, 2013). As noted in other studies, the assumption that charter school autonomy would allow leaders to focus on teaching and learning is not occurring for many charter school leaders (Carpenter & Peak, 2013; Ndoye, Imig & Parker, 2010; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012;).

Goff, Mavrogordato and Goldring (2012) used teacher surveys to study teacher preferences for choosing to work in a charter school and if their preferences impacted a leader's instructional practices. While there was some difference in charter school teachers' characteristics, such as education degree, college attended, and teaching experience, the study

did not find that these differences had a measurable effect on a leader's instructional practice. The study also mentioned that there are differences in whether a charter school is independent or affiliated with a charter management organization, concluding that schools affiliated with the management organizations may help leaders with facilities, recruitment, and instructional design (Goff, et al., 2012).

Theoretical Lens

Weber's Theory of Rationalization

One of the founding principles of the charter school movement was the idea that freeing teachers and leaders from bureaucracy would lead to greater innovation and increased student achievement (Fabricant & Fine, 2007; Grahame, 2008; Lubienski, 2003). In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* originally published in 1905, Max Weber (1998) theorized about how the West responded to modernity and moved towards a *rationalization* of the society and organizations through efficient and bureaucratic institutions. In particular, Weber discussed Protestantism and how hard work and economic success was seen as a new ethic that was supported by the protestant ethic and a shift from the pre-modernist, traditionalist ways of living. Additionally, capitalism provided an economic model that was conducive and inevitably prone to *rationalization* or, in Weberian terms, the replacement of traditions, values and emotions as motivators with rational, scientific or calculated motivators (Weber, 1998). In reference to capitalism and rationality in the West, Weber (1998) states, "There was repeated what everywhere and always is the result of such a process of rationalization: those who would not follow suit had to go out of the business" (p. 68). This process of *rationalization* is something charter schools may develop as they mature and this notion would provide an innovative way to understand the charter school teaching context. For example, are charter schools responding to

maturation by increased *rationalization* as there are increased state and federal level accountability demands? Also, is this an inevitable process that institutions in the West will go through and will this lead to the Weberian concept of disenchantment for leaders and teachers? Ultimately, my question that remains is how do leaders and teachers experience these forces of *rationalization* in charter schools and how do they affect a charter school teacher's motivation.

Issues Affecting the Effectiveness of Charter Schools

Autonomy and Accountability

In the review of literature on charter schools, several tensions were found with regard to how the growth of charter school reform has developed. One concept that comes up in many articles of research is the idea of school autonomy. One of the primary forces that led to the creation of charter schools was that greater school and teacher autonomy would lead to innovation and higher achievement (Lubienski, 2003). However, many articles discuss the paradox of how this autonomy is in conflict with external accountability, the infusion of Charter Management Organizations or the scaling up of charter schools and the maturation of charter schools (Kostogriz, 2012; Marsh, Hamilton & Gill, 2008; Tolson, 2011). The tension appears to be whether charter schools can mature without incurring bureaucratic structures that charter school proponents believe limit the effectiveness and ability to be responsive to students.

Teacher Retention

Teacher retention is another issue found in the literature on how to create ideal teaching conditions in charter schools. Conditions such as a lack of job security, lower salaries, longer working hours, and an intense use of objective data create stresses for teachers. While teachers may be committed to the school and the community they serve in a charter school, these factors force many teachers to consider other schools or areas of employment. Ironically, some of the

schools that are celebrated as highly successful face some of the highest numbers of teacher attrition (Yeh, 2013). The tension appears in what many consider the innovative, high achievement conditions demanded by schools serving underprivileged populations and whether leaders and teachers can sustain the pace needed to create optimal learning for these students.

Scaling up or Franchising Charter School Brands

Another issue facing charter schools is the difference of philosophy between the independent charter schools and charter school franchises or organizations. For example, the issue of autonomy looks very different when researched in an independent school where more localized autonomy is contrasted with a charter school franchise in which the classroom curriculum and teaching methodology might come from a corporate office. Also, for leaders, autonomy is bound to be experienced differently in an independent charter school compared to a charter school franchise. As the scaling up or franchising of charter schools gains momentum, further research is needed to be more specific as to the context of charter schools being researched (Tolson, 2011). As Yeh (2013) reported, if charter schools are going to continue to be scaled up and franchised, there may continue to be a shortage of teachers who are willing or able to teach in those schools and, thus, there is a tension between what works in one context and how far charter schools are able to apply that model to other contexts or locations. In conclusion, there appears to be a rapidly expanding tension between the idea of smaller, independently run charters schools serving a local population and the extent to which successful models can be franchised to replicate strong achievement in other locations.

Gaps in the Literature

As charter schools have developed, there have been some recent developments that need further investigation to be better understood. One area in general that needs to be researched is the unique contextual factors of charter schools that typically include:

- a newer and smaller school,
- less job security than in a traditional public school,
- fast-paced and innovative environment,
- a unique cultural or curricular focus,
- strong parent or community involvement, and
- a competitive market for students.

With the caveat that there are many different types of charter schools, these conditions are some examples of what makes working in a charter school unique. While teacher motivation has been studied in other contexts, it has not specifically been studied in charter schools and how charter school leaders can enhance teacher motivation.

Another gap in the literature concerns some of the trends towards charter school models being scaled up, franchised, and managed by for-profit organizations. These strategies are discussed by Fabricant and Fine (2012) in their book, *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education*. Something that has not been researched extensively is the effect of charter school franchising on the ability of individual charter schools to remain innovative and serve local populations. Furthermore, there is a need to study teacher motivation within these franchise schools. If there is indeed a glacial shift in charter school reform toward corporate models, teacher motivation and charter school leadership research in these contexts will inform future charter school teachers and leaders about to anticipate and handle these changes.

There is also a lack of research on whether perceived or real charter autonomy is actually effective in enabling innovation and increasing student achievement. As previously mentioned, charter schools were designed to offer more autonomy, but there appears to be a gap in the literature as to whether this is occurring and whether student achievement is occurring as a result.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

A phenomenological approach was used in this study. As Creswell (2013) states about philosophical perspectives in phenomenology, “[Phenomenology] is a philosophy without presuppositions. Phenomenology’s approach is to suspend all judgments about what is real-the ‘natural attitude’-until they are founded on a more certain basis” (Creswell, p. 77). I intended to conduct my research with an understanding of my personal charter school experiences and allow the participants to guide the discussions as much as possible to reveal what they find motivating or not motivating about teaching in charter schools as well as leading charter schools. I needed to listen to my participants and enter into research without preconceived notions, or at least understand what my assumptions are, so I can understand where my experiences intersect or diverge from my participants’ experiences.

In addition to suspending judgments about reality, another aspect of phenomenology that is applicable to my study is the shared experiences of a concept. My interviewees all talked about motivation and how they experience it in their charter school experiences. I interviewed teachers and leaders who have experienced teacher motivation while working in charter schools. I studied teacher motivation from several interviewees’ perspectives. As Creswell (2013) states:

The type of problem best suited for this form of research [phenomenology] is one in which it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. It would be important to understand these common or shared experiences in order to develop practices or policies or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon (Creswell, p. 81)

Because I listened to and learned from the lived experiences of participants, my research primarily used interviews. As Creswell (2013) states, ‘In a phenomenological study, the participants may be located at a single site, although they need not be. Most importantly, they must be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experiences (Creswell, p. 150). Telling stories from interviewees’ shared and lived experiences using a phenomenological approach was well suited for this study. I believe that I have some strong conclusions regarding the phenomenon of teacher motivation in charter schools.

The intent of this research was to inform the charter school community about how teachers are experiencing motivation and how charter school leaders can enhance teacher motivation in this context.

Researcher Positionality

As a former charter school teacher and current charter school leader, I know that teacher motivation is a huge issue for charter schools. This is a very personal topic for me, and the very concept of how I saw leadership in charter schools leading me and many of my colleagues towards a loss of motivation for our work was influential. I was looking to understand these experiences and how we can go forward with a better understanding of these experiences. I believe charter schools will continue to be a major part of educational reform, but if teachers continually burn out and lose motivation, students will suffer. With this very personal connection to my topic, I needed to maintain an objective mind frame towards what I am learning. Although this is a shared experience of which I am a part, how each of us experience alienation and motivation is diverse. Prior to engaging in research, I needed to understand my assumptions to remain as objective as possible. My assumptions included:

- Teacher motivation is something that all teachers experience at different stages of their careers and charter school leaders have an impact on teacher motivation.
- With fewer job protections structurally, charter schools present a unique challenge to maintain teacher's motivation to teach.
- The accountability demands and lack of job security, may lead some teachers to be less innovative since they have very little time to show academic achievement.
- There is incredible diversity among charter schools, charter school teachers and styles of charter school leadership.

In conclusion, while acknowledging my biases in this research, I needed to form a broader understanding of these concepts if my research is going to contribute to a larger understanding for the good of charter school leadership and teacher motivation.

Participants

Participants in this study were charter school teachers or charter school leaders. I found teachers and leaders who have a range of experiences in different settings, and it was assumed they experienced motivation in different ways. I asked the participants to agree to a 45-60 minute recorded interview and assured them of confidentiality. I used pseudonyms for the names of the individuals participating in the study and the names of their schools when I reported on findings and analyses in later chapters. I used limited school information since that might be an identifier, especially for school leaders. I recruited participants from Minnesota charter schools from contacts I have in charter schools. For participants who are charter school leaders, I recruited from my network of colleagues in the charter school community. For both groups, I used snowballing strategies and asked interviewees if they knew of other charter school teachers or leaders who might be willing to interview with me. It was not difficult to find participants

using this strategy. I found that many charter school teachers and leaders were passionate about the movement and concept of charter schools and wanted to contribute to the research base. It was important for this study to get a broad sampling of data since the nature of charter school experience is so diverse. Factors, such as the mission of the school, how long the school has been open, and the accountability systems used likely have had an impact on the experience of teacher motivation.

Using convenience and snowball sampling, I interviewed twelve teachers, and six school leaders. I intended to have a diverse group of teachers and leaders from different schools and levels of experience. I wanted to understand the shared experiences from a diverse set of teachers’ and leaders’ perspectives. It was one of my assumptions that most teachers who have taught in charter schools have experienced some form of motivation or demotivation. All of the teachers and leaders I interviewed were from urban charter schools. The demographics of the participants are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Demographic Information for Research Participants

Charter School Leaders

Leader Name	Years in Charter School Leadership	Years in Traditional Public School Leadership	Gender	Race	Size of Current Charter School (Students)	Type of Charter School	Licensed Admin
John	2	20	Male	Asian	100	Vocational Middle School Grades 5-8	Yes

Jane	6	0	Female	Caucasian	500	Foreign Language Immersion K-8	Yes
Richard	8	0	Male	African	400	Dual Language K-8	Yes
Rita	10	7	Female	Asian	600	Culture Focus K-8	Yes
Tom	5	0	Male	Caucasian	400	Alternative K-12	No
Brett	8	0	Male	Caucasian	200	Alternative High School	No

Charter School Teachers

Teacher Number	Years in Charter School Teaching	Years in Traditional Public School Teaching	Gender	Race	Size of Current Charter School (Students)	Type of Charter
1 – Tony	10	0	Male	Arab	200	Culture Focused Middle and High Schools
2 – Skye	10	10	Female	Caucasian	200	Culture Focused Middle

						and High Schools
3 – Solomon	5	5	Male	African	600	Culture Focus K-8
4 – Vincent	8	2	Male	Caucasian	200	Culture Focus High School
5 – Samantha	8	11	Female	Caucasian	200	Culture Focus All Grades
6 – Mike	15	4	Male	Caucasian	600	New Immigrant Focus K-8
7 – Tracy	3	0	Female	Caucasian	600	Culture Focus K-8
8 – Martina	13	5	Female	Caucasian	500	Social Justice Mission K-8
9 – Beth	5	1	Female	Caucasian	400	IB Focus K-8
10 – Bridget	10	0	Female	Caucasian	400	Dual Language Focus K-8

11 – Marty	4	0	Male	Caucasian	100	Alternative High School Culture Focus K-8
12 - Sunhee	4	0	Female	Asian	300	

Data Collection and Analyses

I analyzed my research from the interviews in the context of charter schools and the unique environment of charter schools (see interview guides in Appendices A and B). I looked for experiences related to the major charter school purposes, such as a unique mission or focus, greater site-based autonomy and accountability measures. These concepts are some of the known educational reforms that charter schools are designed to encourage. I analyzed these in the context of how teachers are experiencing them, and the teacher's levels of motivation in relation to these concepts.

As mentioned, I used interviews for data for this study and coded these data to search for major themes. I wanted to hear my interviewee's experiences of leadership and motivation in charter schools. I recorded these interviews, transcribed them myself, and stored them on my computer and phone. With these transcriptions, I coded and continued to develop themes. I started with detailed line by line coding to get a detailed sense of my data and what was appearing in the data. From there, I organized these codes around my major research questions. Many of my codes followed the major topics I found in my review of the literature and may include accountability measures, teacher's sense of efficacy, leadership support and perceptions of job security. I used a variety of data analysis techniques such as the analytic necklace, concept maps, and playful metaphors ideas to get to know my data better. I planned to schedule

follow-up interviews with some of my interviewees as more concepts and experiences emerged but did not conduct any follow-up interviews.

Participant Risks and Benefits

The study had some potential risks for the participants. One of the risks to teacher participants was that of the school administrators recognizing their leadership actions in the research after it was completed and reported, thereby changing the teachers' relationships with the administrators. For example, if a teacher discussed leadership actions that decreased motivation, an administrator may recognize those comments. However, using pseudonyms for schools and participants mitigated this concern. Also, simply discussing the concept of teacher motivation with teachers might have led to participant understandings that may alter their work experience. I mitigated this risk by allowing the participants to guide the conversation and also by asking a variety of motivation questions. Another threat is that the participants might have learned more or thought critically about their current position or past experience and this study may inform their understanding; it is not my intention to transform their current work situation by any questions or thoughts that might arise from participating in this research.

To protect the rights of the human subjects, the participants were given a consent form with an introduction to the research question, goals of the research as well as specific measures to protect the participants. These are:

- 1) You will be asked to not use formal names of individuals or schools.
- 2) You will be able to decline to answer any questions.
- 3) You may decline to continue the interview at any time.
- 4) You may decide to destroy any data related to certain questions, and I will not use that data in any future published documents.

5) You may decide to withdraw completely from the study, and I will destroy the data.

Additionally, the participants were instructed that there is no compensation or in-kind rewards for participating in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this research, I set out to better understand the experiences of teachers and leaders in charter schools to add to the research base surrounding charter schools. To organize the results of my interview data, I ~~will use my original research questions and~~ organize the responses around ~~those my original research~~ questions. Certainly, there are some overlapping concepts ~~which I will delve into more in the analysis of my results~~ across the themes. I have two sections of results: ~~One one~~ from the results of my teacher interviews and one from the results of my leader interviews.

Results from Teacher Interviews

The Main Factors that Make Teacher Motivation Unique in Charter Schools

~~My~~ My first research question was:

Charter School Demographics

One of the founding principles of charter schools is that they are formed by community members and parents. As a result, many charter schools have a more focused approach to school culture and appeal to members of specific cultural groups (See Table 5.1 – Demographic Group Appeal). School mission statements often include focusing on unique cultural groups, such as East African, Hmong or Korean. This sense of focusing on and belonging to a cultural group led some teacher interviewees to feel a sense of community from the beginning of their positions and be drawn to teach at that particular school. Further, the unique cultural group of the school ~~knew~~ indicates that the teacher chose to work with students and parents from this cultural group as opposed to a large traditional school district, and this sense of connection was important to both the teachers and the cultural groups with whom they work. Many teachers also stated that being

part of the unique cultural groups was something that motivated them to work in charter schools and remain motivated to teach in charter schools (See Table 5.1 below).

Table 5.1: Decision to Work in a Charter School

Group	Frequencies of Responses	Reasons Given
Teachers	6	Needed a Position
	9	Demographic Group Appeal
	2	Mission
	6	Innovative Approach
	1	Logistics
School Leaders	0	Needed a Position
	3	Demographic Group Appeal
	1	Mission
	4	Innovative Approach
	0	Logistics
	4	Less Bureaucratic

International Cultures and Experience

One common motivational trait that I found in many of my teacher interviewees ~~of~~ working in urban charter schools was their international experience and a desire to work at a school with an international focus or demographic. Many teachers had overseas experience and were excited to continue working with diverse populations here in Minnesota. One of the teachers, Sunhee, is an immigrant to Minnesota and described teaching in a culturally-focused charter school as being really fun and exciting to see how different cultures can come together to create some really exciting things in the classroom. Bridget further describes the community that is formed in a school with a dual language format with students from many different birth countries:

The students here...I just adore the students. They are really great kids and that the fact that they do come from many different places and work really well together is a really awesome aspect of this school. It really feels like they come here for comfort, they come

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here for acceptance, they come here for safety and I think we do a really good job of providing that for them.

Small Schools

Another idea mentioned as a factor in teacher motivation in charter schools is working at a smaller school that has a family-like atmosphere. Many teachers commented on how their voices mattered to leadership, they got to know students and their families and this was a critical part of maintaining motivation in a charter school. ~~One teacher,~~ Bridget says, “I like that it is governed locally and not part of some big district. I kinda like that ~~coz-cuz~~ that’s the fact the staff kind of has control over what’s happening.” Other teachers said that being a small school and being part of all decisions helped them stay motivated. Part of the family-like atmosphere extended over to colleagues in charter schools. ~~as~~ Tracy states:

The colleagues here and at other charters were very supportive of each other, and I think that’s the key that holds the school together. We know that we have to help each other to survive, to improve the quality of the student’s education so I like that part of it, the cohesiveness of the staff. I felt welcome and I felt part of the team so I was really happy about that.

Skye ~~continues to discuss~~ discusses how she feels valued in a small school setting:

[In] the school I am at now, I feel like people listen to me. It hasn’t always been like that. Sometimes when they get bigger, you kind of lose your voice. In a small school, where you don’t have a lot of teachers, I think they value you more. They value your opinion, like I went to order some textbooks for my class and just like that-I got them. Sometimes I would hear ‘oh we don’t have the money, etc’ but here they said, ‘Oh I think that’s a valuable way to spend the money’. So, that could not have happened at most of the schools I’ve been at. So that was very positive and made me feel valued, that they valued my opinion that much.

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Many teachers commented that they felt trusted by the community since charter schools can be a smaller. Solomon, a teacher who has taught in charter schools as well as traditional public schools ~~saysaid~~, “Well, what I really liked about teaching in a charter school is that I really felt trust from parents which I didn’t always feel in a traditional public school”. ~~1....’~~ The participants felt that being part of a smaller, more focused community school helped build this sense of trust and community.

Conversely, some interviewees’ experiences in culture-focus schools led to the question about the validity of benefits for students in being a culturally-focused school. Bridge responded saying that believed there were some negative aspects of being in a charter school focused on one culture.

W...~~but~~ we are not seeing the diversity in the classroom...we’re saying it would be helpful to have others to draw from and that is part of the drawback of being homogenous in the classroom....my other school was the same with the Somali students...I think they respond better when they see other cultures. ~~-(Bridget).~~

Skye ~~also~~ stated similar concerns: based on her experiences in charter schools.

I know they are all welcome...there are only two white students so they are not coming because they know it’s a Hmong school and at the other building there were a few other cultures, but they weren’t treated well so I think they left because they were the extreme minority and they just didn’t fit in.

Some of the respondents ~~did~~ noted that culturally-focused schools had a school culture or focus such as studying native languages, cultural liaison support, and recruiting for target communities that ultimately encouraged students outside ~~this~~ their demographic group to seek other schools which the teachers found demotivating. One teacher ~~also transferred from a school that was nearly in a~~ largely monoculture environment transferred to a school that was more diverse, and she appreciated the diversity among students at the new charter school.

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Many teachers I interviewed felt a connectedness to what they saw as an alternative to the traditional public school model. Marty stated, ‘I knew I wanted to teach in an urban setting. I think in terms of philosophy and approach, I really thought about myself and my experiences, and my own experience as a student was that a traditional model didn’t work for me.’ The interviewees reported that they found teachers who were more willing to innovate, had diverse life experiences, and were willing to work with urban students from diverse backgrounds in charter schools.

Charter School Innovation

A founding principle of the charter school reform is that charter schools would be able to innovate with less bureaucratic controls and more localized leadership. One the questions I asked my participants was whether they valued the ability to innovate and whether they saw innovation as something that motivated them to teach in charter schools. The responses varied by school and interviewee, with some teachers seeing innovation and other teachers not seeing or seeming to care about innovation as a strong motivator for them.

Student-Centered Schools

~~ne area of innovation that some~~ One area of innovation that teachers in charter schools found motivating was ~~was the to have the~~ ability to be student centered and to follow student interests. For example, one teacher in a charter high school was able to follow student interests in Hurricane Katrina and ~~Jazz-jazz~~ culture with a trip to New Orleans to study those two concepts. Other teachers commented on how they were able to go beyond the standards and use innovative methods, such as project-based learning or cooperative learning to extend beyond the standards. Sunhee commented on how she was able to learn from two diverse student cultures, “Both sides could create something and I wanted to study that kind of stuff. Two different

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cultures and teaching two different cultures.” In general, the teachers from culturally-focused schools commented on how ~~this a culture-cultural~~ focus seemed to empower the students, build confidence, and form a tight knit learning community.

Innovation and Accountability

Some teachers commented on how state accountability measures, such as standardized testing, negatively impacted how they were able to innovate in charter schools and how this affected their motivation. When responding to the question, “Do you think the school can live up to its mission of educating bilingual students under the current accountability system”.

Bridget states:

Innovation and Job Scope

Another area where teachers mentioned innovation was about the scope of the job of a teacher in a charter. This ability to innovate appeals to some teachers who are interested in leadership and having a voice in the operation of the school. ~~Marty states~~ Regarding the scope of his position as a charter school teacher in a small high school, Marty said:

~~Going back to innovation, was that something that was important for you? A place where you saw innovation happening, where you could innovate?~~

As Marty stated, the ability to innovate can also be a burden when leadership expects too much or provides too little structure. Some teachers commented on how they are expected to produce all the curriculum with very little guidance from leadership in charter schools. Some commented that the spirit of innovation was sometimes used as an excuse for lack of resources. For example, one teacher commented that the leadership did not want to purchase curriculum materials because the leader wanted the teachers to be creative and design their own materials. The teacher said this felt overwhelming at times instead of innovative or inspiring creativity.

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Less Bureaucracy

A final area where innovation was mentioned as a motivating factor for teachers in charter schools was in being a nimble or less bureaucratic school structure. Many teachers feel valued and validated by policies and leadership that is able to act quickly on recommendations from teachers. ~~Also, as Marty states, this~~ This school structure allows things to happen quickly but also requires teacher responsibility. Marty explained it as:

~~nd right so, in that way, we~~ We are very agile and nimble in that we don't have to navigate all that but at the same time, if you want to see change you are responsible for that. It's not going to happen from someone else, so take all the responsibilities of being a teacher and add onto that your own unique vision to implement those things. ~~s---~~ I think to a lot of people that's daunting and probably not in line with their vision of what it means to be a teacher.

Charter School Leadership

Another area where motivation in charter schools can be unique is in school leadership. This can be beyond a traditional school structure with a principal leading a group of teachers. In charter schools currently, teachers serve on the board and, in many charter schools, teachers are encouraged to pursue leadership opportunities, including serving on the school board, ~~being~~ serving as a lead teacher, taking on administrative duties as well as working in teacher-led schools. Many responses in my interviews indicated, ~~that~~ for many charter school teachers, the opportunity for leadership was a motivating factor. Other areas that ~~charter school~~ teachers mentioned as ~~a-factor~~s in what makes teacher motivation unique in charter schools ~~related to leadership areas of~~ were teacher autonomy, teacher evaluation, teacher turnover, and logistical factors involved in motivation, such as salary and job stability.

Autonomy and Leadership

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Many teachers interviewed for this study responded that they felt they had a great amount of autonomy in charter schools ~~and this~~which was a motivating factor for ~~the teachers~~them.

Samantha appreciates the autonomy and empowerment ~~the autonomy~~ she experiences; ~~provides~~,

The thing I like about this job and being in charter schools is that I can really create my own program. Like I have the flexibility and opportunity to kind of design the program model. ~~I~~ I do some pullout, some push-in, whole class lessons, ~~we~~ we really utilize every kind of method in a fluid and flexible way. ~~and~~ And, it's not told to us we have to do this or we have to do that. ~~I~~ I really like having that opportunity, and it not being dictated. ~~so~~ So, I'd say that it's best for the students and it feels good as an educator to be able to design ~~e~~ d that as needed.

Samantha also commented on the ability to be involved in the day-to-day decisions by being active in the organization through the smaller size of many charter schools and how this gives her a greater sense of commitment to her work. Martina also said, ~~that~~ "My voice being heard is worth \$10,000!" ~~Conversely~~, Skye also sees the duality of autonomy and how it can be too much at times:

~~almost~~ That's one of the struggles I have with charter schools. ~~I~~ I feel like I have too much. At both schools I've worked at, I've completely designed my own curriculum which, as a second and third year teacher, is pretty intimidating. ~~At~~ At one school, I didn't even get a ~~syllabi~~ syllabus and with another school it was, "This is what I've done but do whatever you ~~want~~ want", which is great but is also a little nerve-racking with "Yes, we have these standards and, yes, we need to teach to the test", but it's very overwhelming with where do we even start sometimes. So that's been one of the things, sometimes I think there is a little bit too much freedom, but I don't want it fully taken away.

Teacher Evaluation

Most of the teachers discussed how they were evaluated and observed many times every year and how this affected their motivation. Teachers expressed a desire to be part of a dynamic

teaching force and largely appreciated the evaluation to encourage high levels of professionalism. Martina contrasts the difference in the evaluation models between traditional public schools and charter schools,

~~I've found that...I don't know how to say this other than directly...~~ found that before I came to work here that there wasn't a lot of dead wood... teachers who were occupying their chair and exchanging carbon dioxide for oxygen but not necessarily contributing a lot. ~~but~~ I had come from a situation where I had good colleagues in the traditional public school, but I had a colleague who was observing me get ready, get the paperwork ready for an administrator to come to class and observe me and he said that he had not been observed or evaluated for like for twenty years! And it was like, "~~A~~ are you kidding me"? ~~?!?~~ I said this is what's wrong with public education. ~~n...~~ ~~T~~hat's not the case with charter schools or at least it's not my experience, there are not people who are protected by unions or barely doing their job and so I think the colleagues that I've met and work with are top notch. Every year our school, when new staff gets introduced, I'm just amazed at the talent that is attracted to work at our school... kind-hearted souls who want to work with urban, poor kids. ~~T~~hat's what they are doing there. ~~e...~~ These are kids out of schools where I can imagine how do you pay off your student loans... you went to these unbelievable schools [~~+~~colleges] ~~+~~and now you're working in a charter school. ~~that we've~~ We've attracted some fabulous people, and I've had the pleasure of working with them.

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Tony also commented on how important it is to him to have competent colleagues and how he sees this as part of the job of leadership to evaluate teachers and hold them accountable. Tony also stated that equity in evaluations is important. That is, the idea that all teachers are held accountable on a yearly basis similar to the quote above ~~from-expressed by~~ Martina. Additionally, many teachers commented on how valuable the feedback and evaluations from leadership were in helping them develop as teachers.

Hygiene Factors and Leadership

Hygiene factors in Fredrick Herzberg's motivation theory or Two-Factor theory are described as things such as pay, working hours and conditions, benefits and job stability. While this was not a ~~major theme~~ finding that emerged from ~~for~~ most of my interviewees, ~~there were a few~~ a few interviewees mentioned such factors ~~that were mentioned~~. One of the main factors teachers mentioned was a disparity in pay compared to traditional public school teachers. The common ~~theme~~ concern was that the pay should be equitable with traditional public teachers' income. Tracy ~~commented on is an issue and she~~ believes she would make substantially more in a traditional public school; however, it has not been enough of an issue to force a change in teaching position for her. She further commented that having a voice in leadership is worth the pay differential to her. Martina also commented on how she's seen many teachers leave her charter school to seek higher pay, but then return when they realize the working conditions at other schools do not satisfy them.

Some charter school teachers also are occasionally asked to work extra hours and most are not unionized schools. Bridget ~~states~~ stated that this is not a major issue, but ~~does have~~ limits expressed issues regarding working hours,

I would say they need to have realistic expectations and even if you're not unionized, you need to have consideration of those things where you are expected to be there... I know that the KIPP schools... I would never work there... I feel that they are doing a disservice to teachers everywhere, so... like anything you can do that's opposite of them! A union would be great but at least keeping up with decent pay, regular hours those kinds of things.

Skye also mentions that working hours and expectations need to be reasonable and says, "There are some schools that have an extended school day, they go to like 4:30. I don't even apply to

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places like that. And then they go to like July. I travel every summer...pay is important but not that important.” In general, most charter school teachers I talked to understand that charter schools are not funded as well as traditional districts, do not offer job protections such as tenure, but these teachers stay because they are committed to the mission of the school.

How Leaders Create Conditions for a Motivated Teaching Force

My next research question was: *How do leaders intentionally create conditions and respond to challenge in charter schools to maintain a motivated teaching force?* Again, I intended to explore what were some of the unique challenges in charter schools and how can leaders respond to these. While there was some overlap with first question, some of the topics that came up repeatedly were being mission driven, encouraging innovation and teacher leadership, being responsive to teacher voices, and providing stable, quality leadership.

Being Mission Centric

One of the unique factors of charter schools is they are chartered around a mission that is often very unique to the community it serves. Several interviewees found the mission of the charter school was a powerful motivator for them to remain at the school and remain a motivated teacher. They said that they felt it was important for the leader to keep the mission central to the work they do and highlight it often. Several of the interviewees stated that they were attracted to the school because of its unique mission, and remaining true to that mission was important to them.

Social and Emotional Factors of the Mission

For some teachers, the social and emotional factors of the mission and the community drawn to the mission was motivating for them. Solomon discussed how he felt about the school community he in which he worked and the importance of choosing to be part of the school for

the teacher, students and parents. He mentioned that he very motivated to see students in uniform and this helped build a cohesive school community. Solomon believed the social community of a charter school was something that was critical to families who chose to enroll their kids there.

Solomon also continued to discuss that while the school may have looked like a failing school on paper or according to state assessment data, he believed it was successful because the mission resounded so strongly with students and parents. Samantha also talked about how the leader in her school was very strongly mission focused, and each year would deliver a speech that focused on some aspects of the mission and how everyone would look forward to the inspirational speech. Another teacher stressed how the mission brought everyone together and helped form a tight knit community that focused on a unique cultural group that was a recent immigrant group to Minnesota. The teacher mentioned how working with a newer group focused everyone's attention on this group and led to collaborative and caring group of teachers who were willing to work together around the mission.

Providing Teacher Support

While providing teacher support is critical for a leader in any type of school, the charter school teachers I interviewed did indicate that providing teacher support in charter schools has unique qualities. Many of the respondents reported that direct leader support was critical for them to remain motivated while teaching in charter schools. Many of the responses correlate to central tenets of charter school reform such as being timely and responsive to teacher feedback, providing quality opportunities for professional development, promoting teacher self-efficacy, and building personal and trusting relationships with teachers.

Providing Quality Feedback

Teachers in charter schools had many comments relating to how they valued frequent leader feedback. Many teachers commented on how they received more feedback and evaluations in charter schools than they did in traditional public schools, and they appreciated when these were focused on growth and development. Some teachers commented on how they received frequent feedback on their teaching and, while they sometimes did not agree with the feedback, it always made them think about their practice. Vincent, as an experienced teacher, mentioned how he never received prescriptive feedback when he was in a traditional public school but was supported with direct and prescriptive feedback and training in his charter school. Skye commented on the quality feedback she received from the feedback system on the school:

We'll do this thing called instructional rounds where we'll go around and like a group of us will go in and watch another teacher teach for like 15-20 minutes and sometimes we'll have things we are supposed to be looking for...we're not supposed to be like critique the teaching at all but some teachers will tell me things I do well which is always helpful and things I can ask.

Some teachers felt that they got stronger and more frequent feedback in their charter school than they did in traditional public schools. Bridget states:

In my last charter school, what I liked about that school was that it pushed me...when I thought I was doing great, they would always give me a compliment sandwich like 'that was great, but then they would give ways that I can improve. I always thought of it as a challenge. I really stepped up my teaching. I would say I learned more the two years at that school-expectations were really high. It was a TAP [Teacher Advancement Program] school and there were a lot of mentors. There was always someone in your room.

Another teacher, Marty commented on how he would appreciate more feedback in his charter school:

I would say that is one of the big criticisms I have with my experience here so far...I want to be improving my craft. Every day I come here and that requires a lot of feedback and I haven't gotten a lot of feedback. I'd like to think that being versatile in almost any educational setting I can adapt but I don't feel like I'm getting the support I need in that way. The feedback has not been altogether critical or constructively critical and that to me is definitely missing.

Supporting Teacher Leadership

Many charter school teachers I interviewed appreciated having a strong voice in the direction of the school and pursued leadership opportunities, and they found these motivating for them. Tracy commented, "Investing in PD is important. I think giving teachers an opportunity to grow and take on leadership responsibilities is great. I know the current school I'm at hires a ton from within and promotes from within, so that is very motivating for me since it's something I'm interested in." Many other teachers commented on how they had the chance to have a voice in leadership, whether that was simply talking directly to the school leader or actually serving on the board of the charter school. They appreciated that decisions were not only top down directives but that teachers had a voice in what decisions were made. Martina was very involved in leadership in her charter school and discussed how important it is for her voice to be heard by leadership:

I think teachers in general want to be seen as, not necessarily as authorities, but want to be seen as having some knowledge about what it takes to be a teacher and what is involved in education, and be held as leaders or be encouraged to be leaders, and I think a lot of that has taken away from them in a large school model. You have people making decisions for you all the time and handing down some new initiative, some new set of parameters, some new curriculum and you are seen as kind of the distributor of that new thing without ever being consulted about, you know, the purpose or need or results even. So, in a charter school, you have the opportunity and the need to position teachers as leaders and hear their voices and see them [teachers] as 'you're the one working with the

kids. You're the one who is getting to know them day in and day out and figure out what their individual needs are and figure out what you can do to meet those needs. What can I do as an administrator to help you do your job? So, I think encouraging teachers to become leaders in your school is extremely important. Showing up to work every day and feeling like you have a say in how that school runs is huge motivation. At least it is to me.

Some teachers who commented that they were asked to take on leadership roles, design curriculum, and observe their peers and felt that some of these opportunities or responsibilities were overwhelming at times.

Building Personal and Trusting Relationships

Many of the teacher interviewees stated that personal relationships and trusting relationships with the school leadership was critical to maintaining motivation in charter schools. One teacher stated that trust is critical from leaders and that teachers can feel that. Another teacher, Mike, stated:

So, I think building relationships [is critical] because a school is as much social interactions and social learning as it is academic learning and that whole idea of emotional intelligence....if you're not open and encouraging relationships, you're not gonna be a good leader. One director we had at Washington would just sit in his office all day.

Numerous teachers commented on how important it is to feel connected with the school community personally and connecting with colleagues personally. They believed that, especially in smaller schools, knowing their colleagues and being able to communicate open and honestly was critical to remaining motivated. Another teacher said that building relationships can create a sense of shared commitment and joy in the school and that is something this teacher valued.

Factors Leading to High Rates of Turnover

Short Term Positions

The third research question was: What are some factors that lead to high rates of teacher turnover in charter schools? There were a wide range of responses to these questions, but the main categories of responses include charter school's positions being seen as short-term for teachers, unrealistic expectations, logistical considerations, and challenges with charter school leadership.

Many of the interviewees expressed the feeling that they did not always feel like teaching in a charter school was a long-term position. A few mentioned how charter schools are sometimes called 'starter schools' where new teachers gain experience before transitioning to traditional public school jobs that typically offer higher salaries and job protections from unions and tenure.

One Year or At-Will Contracts

Most charter school teachers work under one-year contracts or employment agreements and are at-will employees. A few interviewees mentioned this as a cause for higher teacher turnover, and also discussed the stress of a one-year contract. Some interviewees stated that each year in the middle of the year teachers would start discussing whether or not they wanted to come back next year or whether they thought they would be offered a contract for the next year. This yearly stress caused teachers to leave charter schools. This yearly contract question is something many charter school teachers have come to accept but still causes stress as Tony stated that he does not worry as much as some of his colleagues when it comes time for the yearly contract discussions. Many interviewees stated that the yearly contract discussion led to greater turnover when the process was unclear and was seen as unfair or biased. Even teachers who were renewed said they started looking for jobs when they see valued colleagues not being offered new contracts, and there was no sense of the reason for not being offered a new contract.

Teacher Turnover Causing a Lack of Motivation for Teachers

Additionally, teacher turnover itself was something that led to greater teacher turnover in charter schools. Many teachers felt demotivated when they saw colleagues, voluntary or not, leaving the charter schools. This meant working with a new colleague and having to form new relationships each year, which was challenging for returning teachers. One teacher, Solomon, talked at length about how others teachers affected his experience and that of his students:

I would say because of high turnover rates at charter schools I've worked at, it's very hard on a teacher once that staff gets recycled almost at a 100% rate. At the schools I've worked at, there is a 30-60% yearly turnover rate. In fact one of the schools I worked at there was a turnover rate at over 60% within the school year. I've told that to board members of other schools I've talked to and they are shocked with that number. The sad thing is that I don't think that is an anomaly, I also don't think it's the norm, but its something that happens, unfortunately. So, your teachers who have been there 3, 4, 5, 6 years don't really know anybody else on staff and so the motivation goes down, the trust goes down, they feel like they might be next. And that has happened for me at charter schools that I love. I mean now all of the sudden I'm the veteran teacher there and I don't see the people that I started with, that I trained with, I don't see the people from the last year and all the sudden you are the only returning on your team year after year and that's not fair to teachers, it's not fair to kids, especially, because they wonder 'are you coming back?'. In both charter schools I've worked at, one of the top questions is 'Are you coming back next year?'. That's not want you want to hear. And that doesn't happen in a lot of public schools.

The effect on students was something that some teachers mentioned, and Tony expressed how disappointed the students are when many teachers do not return each year.

Short Term Employment Expectations

Many teachers commented on the how the duration or term of employment was somewhat flexible, and the idea of leaving or job hopping seems to have changed. Tracy stated how she experiences this flexibility in employment:

I do think about it [switching jobs] now because I see a lot of people doing that and people don't stay in the job for twenty or thirty years like they used to. I had tenure before in a school in California and at that time it was important for me to have tenure and that's just how it was with everyone. The philosophy of working today is different- people leave if they are unhappy and the contract of a charter school is open. You can leave anytime you want to and they can let you go anytime they want to also, so it's just a flexible thing. I'm not interested in leaving right now, so I'm ok.

Some teachers stated traditional job protections such as tenure were not important to them. In fact, they appreciated that they could find different positions at charter schools and employers would not look negatively upon that or wonder why a teacher did not earn tenure in his/her last school.

Unrealistic Expectations

Many teachers discussed aspects of their jobs that they thought were unrealistic expectations from school leadership and how not living up to those expectations either caused them to leave or they were not offered a new contract. Overall, many teachers felt that they were expected to perform duties well beyond what they anticipated and that school leadership could always threaten to fire them if they did not comply.

Many of these expectations were related to academics as many of the teachers I interviewed were urban charter school teachers in schools serving many low-income or English learner students where there was a significant achievement gap. Solomon commented, "So, at a charter school, you're being told that every kid's gotta meet the standards, but then, in the state of Minnesota, only half the kids can even do it. For me, over time of trying to reach this

unrealistic goal, I don't even want to acknowledge it [the goal]." Many teachers explained that in charter schools there is an intense pressure to perform and produce objective results or the school will lose students or be forced to close by the state for lack of academic success. Some teachers commented that leaders would use this pressure to motivate teachers, but it could be overwhelming and lead to teacher burnout. Solomon felt the threat to be terminated was always present, "The message was always pretty strong that if you don't produce, you'll be let go." Solomon mentioned that there was a 'real fear factor' in charter schools to produce or you would lose your job, and he never felt that type of pressure in a traditional public school.

Another area where some teachers felt unrealistic expectations was in the scope of the jobs and the extra duties they were often compelled to take on or perform. Some teachers were asked to take on leadership duties in Professional Learning Communities, be on the board, or serve on committees before they felt ready to take on leadership opportunities. Other teachers were asked to mentor new teachers without additional time or compensation for the extra duties. Samantha mentioned, "The school leadership is very against having set curriculum, especially in like Language Arts, and I think that caused a lot of teachers to be just overwhelmed and quit." In many cases, teachers felt the need to create their own resources because the school did not have or that wanted to be innovative, which was a challenge with which many teachers struggled.

Logistical or Hygiene Factors

Another factor that came up in some interviews was the logistical factors of pay and working hours. Many teachers seemed to accept that charter schools with usually smaller staff and lower levels of state funding, can not afford to match the pay of large traditional districts. In

some cases, this was an issue that led to the teacher leaving the school. Consistency and uniformity in the pay structure was important to Bridget who stated:

I'd say the pay scale here is pretty good...It certainly doesn't compare to Minneapolis or St. Paul, but it's about 20% less. We're not paid for a lot of extra stuff like a traditional school so it's...it'd be better to have better pay. However, the last charter school I was at, the pay rate was way less and that was a factor for me to get a different job. There was really no way I could continue working there, there were no pay increases whereas here we have a set pay scale and that's definitely good. I mean they do have a few bonuses.

In addition to pay, many charter schools have extended days and working hours and length of the day which was a factor for some teachers. Some teachers commented that they would not even apply to schools with an extended working day because a work life balance is very important to them. Solomon felt the longer working hours were acceptable for a while, but it did begin to affect his motivation once he had a family and wanted more family time. A few teachers commented that they were happy to support cultural events in the evenings as long as they were compensated with extra pay or extra time off.

Lack of Leadership Stability

Another factor that teachers mentioned as a factor for leaving their positions was a lack of leadership stability. Teachers experienced major changes in pay, working expectations and teaching assignments each time a new school leader took over. Sunhee mentioned that leadership caused many teachers to leave her charter school in the middle of the year when leadership retaliated for teachers meeting outside of the school. Marty commented that "but they [school leaders] have this power to do whatever they want it seems, teacher's salaries or many issues." Another teacher, Tracy explained that leadership consistency is an important factor for her:

I would say the number one thing [for low levels of motivation] is a lack of consistency from leadership or lack of leadership in following policies and procedures that we are told we are supposed to follow. So I would say a lack of consistency usually in relationship to behaviors and following what I'm supposed to follow in class and then not getting the same support and follow-up from administration that I'm supposed to get [are reasons].

Overall, teachers felt that it was hard to commit to a school long term when they saw leadership changing often, and this impacted the rates of teacher turnover. They wanted to feel secure that the leadership and school expectations were clear and something they could invest in as a professional.

Results from School Leader Interviews

The Main Factors that Make Teacher Motivation Unique in Charter Schools

—For my research, I interviewed six school leaders in order to find out what how they responded and experienced teacher motivation using the same interview questions as the teachers. My first interview question was:

Charter School Demographics

One of the primary motivating factors for leaders in charter schools is working with the demographics, mission, or focus of the school. Many leaders had personal and heritage connections to the cultures of the schools and expected the teachers to buy in to the mission as well. One leader, Rita, was very focused on working with a particular cultural group and stated:

You know, we have so many public charters out there that are focused on serving this particular demographic [cultural group of recent immigrants] of students but they fail them left and right, the public schools fail them left and right. When they talk about Asian students and they compare the data, it's not this cultural group, they are looking at, your Chinese, Korean, who are already very fluent. I'm very interested in bringing this school, this particular demographic, and beating the odds and being the number one

school, not only in Minnesota but in the nation. We want to be a case study in what is happening here in getting kids that no one else can get to succeed to the level they are at.

Rita also expects working with this particular cultural group to be a motivating factor for teachers and states, “Here with the [target] language and culture, we expect all of our teachers to be learning phrases, to study the culture, and to infuse the background knowledge of their students into the teaching so that’s how we are keeping the mission alive here at Hills.”

Additionally, many leaders said that being in a charter school serving a unique demographic group had a motivating effect and encouraged collaboration among the staff. There were cultural events, such as a Lunar New Year celebration or World Culture Day, that leaders felt helped to build a shared sense of community and purpose in the charter school.

Less Bureaucracy

One of the goals of the charter school reform movement is to create schools that are less bureaucratic more responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. Many leaders noted that they were able to move quicker in charter schools with decisions that allowed them to be more responsive to the needs of the students and teachers. One charter school leader who also had experience in traditional public schools described how decisions can be less bureaucratic in charter schools:

And so it’s that need and desire to transform schools that got me interested in the charter schools because in the charter schools there is a level of flexibility with which you can implement change rapidly compared to many of the public schools. You can implement change in traditional public schools but it has to go through the Associate Superintendent, Superintendent and then to another committee and then to the board to make a decision, so there is time wasted and by the time you actually implement half of the students are gone. In the charter schools you see a problem, you convince people, the executive director can make that decision and inform the board because it’s a management task, and

the board doesn't need to approve it because it's not a catastrophic change to the structure or the requirements that the state requires of the school.

In terms of responding to teacher concerns, the charter school leaders felt that they had the power make and implement decisions quickly so that the teachers would remain motivated and not have to wait years to implement a new program.

Leadership Leverage

Many charter school leaders appreciated the additional leverage they have in charter schools and that all decisions do not have to go through a lengthy chain of command. One leader noted that in a traditional public school decisions took so long that they felt teachers were not motivated anymore to seek out new strategies of innovation whereas in a charter school, teachers have direct access to the leadership who can make those decisions. One leader noted that having the ability to make decisions allowed the leader more ownership over the decisions, which increased the leader's motivation. Several leaders noted that since teachers are on at-will contracts, the leaders have significant power to build the staff they want and let teachers go when they are not performing. Rita noted that the relationship between teacher and school leaders needs to be mutual, "Each person, unless they perform, they won't have a contract, it's all at-will contracts. We love that and we can terminate at the end of the year, but there is that flexibility where we are not forcing anyone to stay, they stay because they wanna stay, its kind of a happy marriage."

How Leaders Create Conditions for a Motivated Teaching Force

My next interview question was, how do leaders intentionally create conditions and respond to challenges in charter schools to maintain a motivated teaching force? Many leaders saw retaining teacher motivation as one of the most important aspects of their leadership, and there were wide variety of comments and strategies about this. The major categories of

responses were in developing teacher self-efficacy, promoting and living the mission of the school, empowering teachers, and using direct leadership strategies.

Developing Teacher Self-Efficacy

Many of the school leaders believe that instructional leadership is the most important work they do as school leaders in charter schools. Rita discussed how she loves to see growth in teachers but also mentions that she holds them accountable:

I love to see the growth. They absolutely love it! You have someone coming fresh from college and, they are “My gosh, I have no idea what to do” and at the end of the school year I am like, “My gosh, have you been trained by me all along?!” Seriously, they were infusing best practices, responsive classroom being used, stations, differentiation, you are talking master teachers in the making! So, I get extremely motivated; however, I also...I drive them.

Rita also compares working in a charter school with working in a traditional public school:

I think in the past I used to say, I’ll come and observe you and traditional teachers are really nervous about having an administrator in the classroom, our teachers are super excited to show me best practices in the classroom but that’s because I see it as “if you have a growth mindset, you take this data and this is a coaching tool to help you be the best teacher possible; however, it becomes punitive if you do nothing with this information. Then it shows me that you don’t have a growth mindset and are not willing to learn. People who are not willing to learn don’t really belong here at Hills because we are all about developing our teachers to be the most efficient, competent, best teacher possible.

John also states how passionate and motivated he is to help teachers grow, “The most rewarding part of my day is when I can model or provide effective feedback to a teacher who would say thanks and vowed to practice what she/he learned from me.”

Some leaders also discussed how challenging the level of rigor in a charter school can be for some teachers. The leaders see the level of rigor as something that some teachers are not

comfortable with and this leads to a loss of teacher motivation. Leaders mention that the level of evaluations and observations can be challenging for teachers. One leader, Jane, felt that the expectations of parents in charter schools is higher since they have made a conscious choice to enroll in a charter school, and some teachers are not ready to live up to those expectations. She has seen teachers leave demotivated and then return stating, “And they do always have a grass is always greener mentality. Then they go elsewhere and say ‘this isn’t what I thought it was’ and they come back with a greater appreciation, but you don’t want that to happen.” Rita discusses a situation she experienced with a teacher from a large, traditional district.

We did hire someone who came in with twenty years of experience teaching in a large city who couldn’t do the job here because, first of all, we use a lot of technology programs that she is not trained in, so we specifically assigned someone to help her, IT guys, curriculum director, and they all show her, but you know you can lead a horse to water, you can’t make it drink so she just could not keep up. She said, ‘I don’t know what it is, I worked in a large urban district, a large suburban district...why are Hills expectations so much higher than them?’ What is it?’ I said it’s not that our expectations are so much higher, it’s that the needs of our students are so much greater for us to meet.

Several of the leaders discussed how teachers needed to show growth and respond to coaching or they would be let go quickly in a charter school environment.

Living the Mission

Most of the leaders I talked to believed that embedding the mission and reminding the teachers often about the mission of the school was something that was motivating for them and the teachers. One leader, Rita, believes her school is helping an underprivileged population that has struggled in traditional public schools, and the mission is motivating for the teachers. They

embed the mission by asking teachers to get involved in the community by taking part in cultural events, such as celebrations and making home visits. One thing many leaders said they found motivating was bringing the mission to the forefront of the school and discussing the mission with the teachers. Leaders see the mission as something critical to maintaining a motivated teaching force. John believes, “It’s critical to know the mission and vision because that explains our viability and justifies our existence.” Rita talked about how she brings up the mission at every meeting and talks about some aspect of the mission and how the school can live its mission. John describes how experiences in a charter may be different from what some teachers have experienced:

To help teachers shift their own beliefs is that you have to see your future in the students you teach. Many teachers have a detached attitude due their own experiences and differences. What I try to teach the staff is that our future depends on the kids and if we are ok with any student to not have to learn or to fail, then we are saying that it’s ok if our future is not going to be bright.

Leadership Perspectives

Charter school leaders see leadership and teacher motivation in different ways. There were comments about the importance of building teacher self-efficacy and coach the teachers. Another topic that come up often was living the mission and promoting the mission the school. The leaders also felt strongly about using direct motivation strategies with teachers, such as using inspirational stories that are aligned with ideas from the mission.

Focusing on Kids

One of the ways that leaders use when creating conditions for a motivated teaching staff was maintaining a focus on the kids. This tied in closely with the mission of the school and

something the leaders discussed frequently with teachers. John stated how he tries to maintain a focus on the students:

I only have one expectation and that is that everything the staff does is with the bottom line of doing what's best for kids. Often when teachers make mistakes, I asked was it best for kids? If they can justify that they had or assumed positive intentions, I can live with the fact that mistakes were made and continuous improvement is a learning process. Teachers react well to self-advocacy and trust. I think about this all the time because I don't want people to do things based on fear and threats. I want staff to do things because it's what is best for kids and, when that happens, the students don't have to rely solely on me for quality education. That's the culture I bring into my leadership and has been very successful all these years.

Many leaders talked about how they discuss the community they are working with and how they need to see their teaching as much more than just a job. John discussed that he stresses to teachers that they need to see themselves in their students and how the future of the society depends on the kids they are teaching.

Leading by Example

Charter school leaders discussed their expanded roles as compared to those in traditional public schools. Rita talked about how she does whatever needs to be done as a leader from cleaning the school to teaching intervention groups herself. Rita states, "I don't just sit in the office and do nothing, you know we are always observing, we are here, there and everywhere, every meeting, and then I work closely with the Executive Director." Other leaders talked about how do everything, including teaching, and this is something they want the staff to know and see. Essentially, as Rita states:

I want to be as involved as possible to say that 'you are not in it alone'...not only that but I've been a teacher, I've been a principal, I've been a coordinator and now I'm at the

superintendent level but I still do everything that they do, I scrub the floor, I take out the trash, so they see that as a motivation.

Motivational Strategies

When I asked leaders what motivational strategies they used with teachers, the most common response was using inspirational stories. Richard talked about how he talks the staff about his experience turning around unsuccessful schools and focuses on the message that they can succeed and that this has to be done before with similar students from disadvantaged students. I also asked if leaders used teachers' fear of losing their jobs to motivate, and most leaders believed that that was not something they used and is not an effective strategy.

Inspirational Stories

Charter school leaders discussed using inspirational stories as a motivational strategy. The leaders wanted to let teachers know about the impact they were having and that they were having a major impact on the students and school community. Additionally, many leaders stated that these stories needed to be backed up by previous success and hard data. John states:

So, people who have not experienced success, do not know what success looks like and so, through stories, you can hook them, and they can see what might happen to the school and that gives a sense of hope. However, inspirational stories are not sufficient, you also have to have the data. Show them that data from a similar population in a different school achieved. Not only that, I also use data from some comparison schools and say, 'look at that', look at this school with a similar population is doing, that means we can do it.

Fear Factors

When asked about using fear or intimidation tactics in charter schools where job protections are minimal, all leaders said that those strategies are not something they use. Rita stated that she did not want a group of teachers who will only do the right things 'when I am around'. Richard also stated that he never uses the possibility of the school closing if teachers

are not giving their best effort because he always wants to assume positive attentions. Tom admitted that he has seen the negative effects where fear and intimidation were used in charter schools:

Yes, I have seen it and morale was awful. ‘You are doing to do your job and you’re going to do it ‘right’ or you’re gonna be gone. No tenure, no protection and ‘right’ means they have to pass the MCA test. So, I saw that and that doesn’t work and that is one of the reasons teachers don’t stay in charter schools. That’s why large districts have strong unions, it is because its protection. The fear creates low morale, animosity, and they don’t create a spirit of collaboration.

Encouraging Teacher Ownership

Another motivational strategy mentioned by many charter school leaders in the strategy to encourage teacher ownership and leadership in the charter school. For many charter school leaders, the line between teachers and administration is less defined than a traditional public school and many teachers are motivated by taking on a more active role in leadership in the school. Many leaders stated that the charter school model, often being smaller with a more focused mission than traditional public schools, encourages teacher’s ownership which greatly increases teacher motivation. John sees it as critical that teachers are actively involved in knowledge creation of the school learning community:

My ideal condition for learning is like a Star Trek school where teaching and learning is a reciprocal process. Teachers, administrators, and students all have a knowledge exchange process where current knowledge can be expanded on with continuous improvement of new ideas and exploration-not just information dissemination. The learning process includes continuous self-improvement as well as knowledge-pool improvement.

One leader, Tom, who is a leader in a teacher-governed charter school, describes the power of knowledge creation and that is part of the value of having a shared leadership structure:

We are all owners of this school and this program. We all buy in and are responsible for the students here. Sometime with a centralized leadership structure, everything is placed on the leaders and teachers can absolve themselves of responsibility. Kind of like an antiseptic – I can wash my hands of this issue. With shared leadership, we are all responsible and it helps build a community of trust, teacher ownership, and leadership.

John further stated that charter schools can effectively provide opportunities to build teacher ownership and leadership:

The only thing I would say is that we can be more profound and more impactful because of the nature of our staff and close knit community. And so I think that if you take that with a grain of salt and say we are all going to work together as a team and stay focused, it's gonna be a lot easier to do that in a charter school than in a large district because in a large district everything is set for you in routines, institutional rituals, and routines, but here it's the three of us-we can decide what we are going to do.

Factors Leading to High Rates of Turnover

Another question I asked both teachers and leaders was, what are some factors that lead to high rates of teacher turnover in charter schools? Teacher turnover was something that many leaders saw as an issue in charter schools currently and going forward. The leaders mentioned a few different factors, such as lack of behavioral support and inference from influential parents, but the most commonly mentioned reason teachers leave is that many teachers see charter schools as 'starter schools' and eventually leave for positions that appear more stable and have a higher salary.

Charter Schools as 'Starter Schools'

Many leaders mentioned that charter schools, as a relatively new reform, can face issues of legitimacy and teachers often seem drawn to traditional public schools that provide more stability, salary and job protections. John states:

What I see is that charter schools are like stepping stones for some teachers, partially for the pay, and second, because they [teachers] build up their experience and move on to a place they want to stay for a long time and charter schools have traditionally been for a long time. I think it's more of a stereotype that it's not a real school. Some people come here, good people, go to a larger district [traditional school] and then they come back and say 'I misjudged' and they stay for a long time. Usually, those stay for a long time.

Jane also stated that it is disappointing that great teachers leave for positions seen by teachers as more professional. She said that charter schools, in their quest to be innovative, must be careful not to drive away great teachers because the innovation can be perceived as a lack of professionalism. She explained that professionalism is in danger in charter schools if charter schools cannot retain teachers. Many leaders also noted that salary was something that drove away teachers and that many charter school teachers made significantly higher salaries in traditional public schools. The leaders stated that many teachers enjoyed their experience and training in a charter but craved long term job stability and salary that traditional public schools could offer.

Challenges of Charter School Maturation

A final question that I asked was, how is the maturation and development of charter schools as a reform affecting teacher motivation in charter schools? This was a question that the leaders provided much more insight into than my interviews with the charter school teachers. The responses spanned a wide range of opinions and noted many challenges and opportunities for teacher motivation in the maturation of charter schools.

Innovation Becoming Normalized

One challenge as a reform initiative for charter schools is that, as the schools mature, they become more bureaucratic and have more barriers to innovation. John noted that although many

charter schools start with a specific or specialized mission and focus, that mission often becomes normalized because it is still within the confines of a public charter school. A leader in a language immersion charter school, Jane, notes that innovation may start in a charter school and then become normalized within the traditional public school community:

I believe immersion schools were innovative when there were not immersion schools in the mainstream, and I believe [charter] immersion schools triggered an interest in immersion ed from traditional public schools, without a doubt. They [traditional public schools] were cutting arts, they were cutting languages, and there were desirable segments of the public that were vacating [traditional public schools] in order to enter charters for those things. That the arts and languages really suffered in the 80s and early 90s makes immersion programs in charters innovative. However, now that immersion has caught in traditional education, I think a lot of the immersion in charter schools look like traditional programs because they are not out to change scheduling or program implementation, they kind of want it to look like a traditional school with the language component, so we're innovative in the realm of language, and we're not innovative in the expectations of the stakeholders or the structures of the school in addition to that.

Jane continued to say that she sees this normalization as something natural when innovation becomes mainstream and there begins to be large amounts of money and power involved in the innovation, which is has happened with some charters.

Unmet Teacher Expectations

Another challenge for the leaders was unmet teacher expectations in charter schools. That is, many teachers were attracted to charter schools because they believed that they would be part of something that was, in some way, reforming education and providing opportunities that were not being met in some traditional public schools. Tom mentioned how the accountability standards of the state, including the MCA achievement data, do not always measure the

standards to which charter school teachers are expecting to be held accountable. Jane also talked about what she sees some unmet expectations involved in teacher leadership and how this affects teacher motivation:

Personally, the danger I see is teachers having unrealistic expectations about how and what ways they should be involved, [it's] is detrimental because when the opportunities are good, they want to engage but when the opportunities are related to how to mitigate a problem, they stay a mile away! So, what I look at and they want decentralized, lateral engagement until a problem arises, and what they want is an extreme hierarchical structure that protects them. I believe it is unprofessional to want the good stuff around innovation and access without the responsibility for the tough stuff.

As the above quote stated, some teachers who may be interested in school leadership might also find that some of those opportunities do not meet their expectations and may not be as empowering as the teachers believed they would be.

Developing Leaders

One challenge many leaders noted as charter schools mature is in developing leaders for charter schools. One leader discussed how traditional superintendent programs do not prepare leaders for the diverse leadership skills required for charter schools. Brett also talked about how unique the program is at his school and how he believes a leader would need to come from within the school to adequately understand the school's history and lead the school in the future.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of charter school teachers and leaders and how this experience affects teacher motivation. Charter schools have been in existence for nearly 30 years and have experienced some challenges and successes and remain a controversial educational reform. I focused on teacher motivation and how it manifests itself in who chooses to work in and remain working in charter schools, what factors affect teacher motivation in charter schools, and what leadership conditions and actions affect teacher motivation in charter schools. I also asked teachers and leaders how they believe charter schools are developing and maturing and how this affects teacher motivation. In the previous chapter, I reported the findings under the main headings of what factors make teacher motivation unique in charter schools, how charter school leaders create conditions to maintain a motivated teaching staff, teacher turnover in charter schools, and how charter school maturation affects teacher motivation.

From my review of the literature about charter schools, teacher motivation and charter school leadership, I expected to find charter schools experiencing growing pains that may be affecting teacher motivation and a teacher's desire to remain in charter schools. Some of the research areas I wanted to learn more about were why teachers and leaders chose charter schools, how state or authorizer accountability standards were affecting charter schools, what were some of the main causes of teacher turnover, and whether charter schools were living up to their promise of less bureaucracy, more innovation and increased parent and community control. I found literature about the concerns facing leadership, issues related to met or unmet

expectations, and different views about motivating teachers, but I did not learn as much about how the development or maturation of charter schools is affecting teacher motivation.

The participants from my study were all from urban charter schools and most the schools focused on a specific cultural group. I did not find differences in experiences between race, gender or experience level in the charter schools although there seemed to a point at which a teacher or leader became a ‘charter school’ person and it seemed to occur with individuals with more than five years of experience. Of the participants I interviewed, about half had experienced teaching or leading in a traditional public school, and these leaders and teachers were the most passionate supporters of charters. Many of the respondents with less than five years’ experience said they would be open to teaching in a traditional public school someday and were not strongly committed to charter schools (see Table 3.1).

After analyzing my interview data from teachers and leaders, I found much of the data could apply to any school, traditional public, private or charter school, so I focused my analysis on the responses that were most unique to charter schools and what makes the experience of teaching and leading in charter schools unique. For example, one assumption I had prior to my data collection was that state and authorizer accountability frameworks might constrict charter school’s ability to implement and live their mission; however, there were not a lot of data or responses to questions about the uniqueness of charter schools. The areas where I found the most relevant data pertaining specifically to charter schools was in demographics of charter school teachers and charter schools themselves, innovation in charter schools, maturation of schools, leadership in schools, and teacher motivation in charter schools.

As discussed in chapter 2, as a framework for looking at the growth, development, and, potentially, re-bureaucratization and *rationalization* of charter schools, I reviewed some of the

writings and theories of Max Weber regarding modern societies and how they have a tendency to become bureaucratic and move towards a *rationalization* of the society as a framework for looking at the growth, development, and, potentially, re-bureaucratization and *rationalization* of charter schools. One of the bedrock principles of charter schools was that they would be less bureaucratic and allow more room for innovation than traditional schools. According to Weber's view, the growth of the bureaucracy might be natural and even beneficial, at least for the efficiency of the organization (Weber 1988). From this viewpoint, a question arises about *rationalization* and bureaucratization and if charter school teachers are forced to follow along with capitalistic norms or have their schools shut down? I will use these theories to analyze some of the findings to extend understandings about teacher motivation in charter schools.

Conclusions

Demographic Considerations of Charter School Teachers and Leaders

One of the first questions I asked charter school leaders and teachers was why they chose to work in charter schools. I received many answers that I would have predicted (see Table 5.1) such as needing a position, demographic group interest, innovative programs and logistical factors. Many teachers discussed feeling more personally accepted in charter schools. This is a concept Weber (1998) discusses in relation to the capitalistic means of production, "The capitalistic economy is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live" (p. 54). Weber continued to state that those who do not conform are "thrown into the streets without a job." Numerous teachers commented on how they felt accepted in charter schools and were not interested in fitting into or conforming to a large bureaucracy of a public school system. Additionally, charter school reform promised to provide teachers and leaders with more localized

control, less bureaucracy with the possibility to be innovative and, perhaps, be more in control of their ‘cosmos.’

The Appeal of the School’s Demographic Population

For both charter school teachers and charter school leaders, one of the most popular reasons given for why they chose to work in charter schools was an affinity or close connection to the demographic group targeted by the school. For two teachers, they were excited to work in an alternative school that worked with students who had been struggling in traditional public schools. One teacher, Marty, said they since he had struggled as a student in a traditional public school, working with this group of struggling students was motivating for him and he believed he was able to be innovative and creative with his students. Skye also said that because of her experience living and working overseas, working with a similar demographic in Minnesota was very motivating for her. She appreciated the cultural connection. In this way, charter schools seem to be providing a unique mission with a focus on certain cultural groups that was part of the original charter school movement.

Another interesting finding that came up for some teachers is that charters seem to be more accepting of teachers and allow teachers the freedom to change jobs without having to face questions about why the teachers did not get tenure. Skye, as an experienced teacher who has had many different teaching jobs, said she feels charter schools ‘are more accepting’. Tenure is also something that was not important to Skye, “I’ve never been in a school that had tenure for one thing but, even if I did, I wouldn’t want that to mean I wouldn’t have to work as hard as a teacher.” For many teachers, one trend in charter schools reflects the changing nature of work today, switching jobs often has become normalized. Mike states:

The philosophy of working today is different...people leave if they are unhappy and the contract of a charter school is open...you can leave anytime you want to and they can let

you go anytime they want to also so it's just a flexible thing...I'm not interested in leaving right now so I'm ok.

Charter schools seem to be a response to the changing dynamics of modern work culture and provide teachers with the opportunity to find teaching jobs that fit them personally and professionally as well as allow the mechanism to change positions without it reflecting negatively on their career.

Charter school leaders were mostly drawn to the charter schools because they are seen as less bureaucratic and more innovative, which not as prevalent of view from charter school teachers. Whereas six out twelve teachers said simply needing a job was one reason they taught in charter schools, no charter school leaders responded to simply needing a job as a reason they chose to work in charter schools. For most leaders, this was reflected in comments about the ability to get things done and have more power in decision making at the school with only the school board needed to make major decisions, while in a traditional public school, there were many bureaucratic channels to navigate to institute change or new initiatives. John, a leader at a dual language charter school, states the ability to implement change as a motivating factor for him. He discussed how, in a charter school, he was able to enact change without going through numerous channels of bureaucracy. Richard also noted that he was drawn to the less bureaucratic structure of charter schools, but noted that leadership decisions can be 'bottlenecked at the Executive Director' in a smaller charter school with limited leadership. Overall, while the charter school leaders enjoyed power and the ability to make and implement decisions, they were still under controls from the school board and faced accountability controls from the state.

Mission Focus in Charter Schools

Charter schools are often founded around a specific mission or cultural group. In this research, I set out to better understand how a charter school's mission affected teacher

motivation. Many teachers and leaders said they were drawn to the specific mission of the charter school in which they worked. Others commented that they weren't initially drawn by the mission but now that it has come into focus, they believe in and are motivated by the mission.

One idea that was stated by many teachers and leaders was a desire to work in a school that had a mission to help kids in need. The teachers and leaders I interviewed were all urban or suburban charter school teachers and leaders and changing the outcomes of kids in need was an important factor for them in choosing to work in a charter school. For many of them, they saw charter schools as being able to address student learning in ways that wasn't happening in other schools. Richard, a charter school leader, describes his work:

If we don't educate the urban population we are gonna have a large low-income class that'll be brown and black so my goal is to say let's help these that seem to be rejected or the students who chose to go to this school because that's the community they live in and those schools are not well prepared to help them. My goal is to help them because I'm one of those. I'm an immigrant to this country and yet I'm doing well, and I believe these children deserve the very best.

Martina, a teacher at a urban school, also states the power of mission:

I've seen new generations of teachers who are buying into the mission and vision and it attracts a certain type of individual, I think I've been fortunate to sit in on interviews and people definitely seem drawn to the mission of the school and what they see on the website, and even the name attracts a certain type of teacher and people who have a willingness to work with urban poor kids and all the things that come with that.

The other manifestation of the mission was mentioned in preserving and working with a unique cultural focus. One leader talked about how important it is to have teachers from all demographic backgrounds learn key phrases from the target language and support the culture. With this cultural investment, the leader believes the school is able to keep its mission alive and

embedded in everything the school does. Rita, a charter school leader, makes it very explicit that they live the mission and expect all teachers to live the mission as well. This is a non-negotiable for her and something she believes strengthens the school and student achievement.

In addition to maintaining a culture focus in the mission, other interviewees felt ownership of the school and its mission. They wanted to protect the mission and felt that they were stewards of the mission of the school. Tom states,

I worked at this charter school for eight years and my decision to apply for a leadership position as director/head of school was really based in appreciating the unique qualities of this school and this site and knowing, through my experience as a teacher, the idiosyncrasies of how we operated our programs were undocumented and could not be handed to another administrator to administer.

In other words, Tom's desire to get into leadership was more to protect what he believes a unique and powerful charter school that does not fit a prescriptive program design or model. It appears that since charters are usually smaller with a unique mission, a sense of community and ownership is encouraged and provides those teachers and leaders who buy into the mission with a strong sense of motivation to see it grow and continue.

Charter School Innovation and Teacher Motivation

One of the theories that Max Weber (2008) espouses is that Western societies are prone to *rationalization* and specialization. Weber (1998) stated, "The most important functions of the everyday life of society have come to be in the hands of the technically, commercially, and above all legally trained government officials" (p. 16). Most charter school teachers and leaders talked about the ability to innovate and make things happen. Sometimes, making things happen seemed like a function of a charter school style family structure, while other teachers, and

especially leaders, discuss the need for structure and systems. Innovation seemed to be a diverse concept with the charter school teachers and leaders I talked to. Additionally, in my literature review, I found that one of the factors that leads many teachers to choose to work in charter schools is charter schools' promise to be more innovative than traditional public schools (House, 2005; Lubienski, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). Recently, as charter schools have grown to become larger individual schools, part of charter networks, and managed by management organizations, it is important to question the effect this growth has on a school's and an individual teacher's ability to innovate. The question I wanted to learn more about was whether this tendency toward *rationalization*, in Weberian terms, negatively affected teachers and if they were drawn to charter schools as a place that would support their desire to teach in an innovative environment.

A desire to teach and work in an innovative environment was prevalent in many charter school educators. Many teachers enjoyed having a wide-ranging job scope and being able to be involved in many aspects of school leadership. One teacher, Marty states:

You know part of the challenge and part of the reward of teaching in a school where innovation is encouraged on any given day you go to work, you are essentially an architect, you are responsible for building a school, and a teacher isn't just a teacher in a charter school. For instance, in my role here I'm doing digital marketing and website development and recruitment and fixing things in the bathroom – that's just kind of the nature of the jobs.

This was a common sentiment in the interviews and the degree to which this ability and, at times, need to innovate varied among the interviewees. Marty stated that having to innovate and be involved in many duties outside of teaching 'can feel like a burden'. The idea of charter schools being incubators of innovation seem to vary greatly among my interviewees and the charter

schools in which they work. Additionally, the idea that the degree to which the ability to innovate seems similarly as diverse and depends on whether this appeals to teachers or not. One leader, Richard, stated that a leader needs to be clear to the teachers about how the school is innovative:

Well, I think helping them [the teachers] recognize that they are part of something innovative, part of the cutting edge of education, this is where innovation can be tried, where they can have the biggest impact, and I always think that the kinds of people that work in charter schools are probably motivated by other things than the bottom line cash.

In conclusion, it appears that innovation is happening in varying degrees but it is a concept that needs to be developed by leadership as a motivator for teachers.

Conversely, there were also some interesting comments about how innovation can negatively impact teacher motivation. As stated above, one way was by simply by having a lack of resources or asking teachers and leaders to take on extra tasks, which was, understandably, seen as demotivating. Also, taking on innovative concepts requires responsibility which can be challenging for some teachers. As a teacher, Mike, stated:

In that way, we are very agile and nimble in that we don't have to navigate all that but, at the same time, if you want to see change you are responsible for that. It's not going to happen from someone else, so take all the responsibilities of being a teacher and add onto that your own unique vision to implement those things. I think to a lot of people that's daunting and probably not in line with their vision of what it means to be a teacher.

As previously quoted, Jane commented on how innovation in charter schools can quickly become normalized or rationalized, which would support the goal of charter schools to be incubators of innovation in education. She noted the example of language immersion schools as an innovation that started to become popularized by charter schools and now are being adopted by an increasing number of charter schools. Jane illustrated that it appears that charter schools can innovate, but when the innovation becomes normalized, stakeholders want the innovation to 'look like a traditional school'. Upon analysis, it appears that innovation can be a powerful,

motivating concept for teachers and leaders but leaders need to promote and support the idea so that teachers will continue to be motivated by this concept in charter schools.

Charter School Maturation and Teacher Motivation

Using Weber's theory of how Western society encourages a growth in bureaucracy as institutions grow, I found some interesting parallels about how charter schools are maturing and how this is affecting teacher motivation. Again, assuming charter schools provide more autonomy, less bureaucracy and more innovation than traditional schools, there were many important concepts discussed regarding teacher's and leader's motivation as charter schools mature.

Most of the comments related to charter maturation were from charter school leaders who addressed the challenge of having systems in schools and how easy it is to re-bureaucratize charter schools in the process. Charter schools seem to be in a gray area where freedom to innovate and create new school cultures organically are appreciated but can have negative consequences. One teacher explained how a teacher was terminated simply because her students did not pass the MCAs one year. Another teacher said he does not agree with the measures that are used to determine which schools can be replicated and believes that the profit motive is one of the main reasons schools are being replicated. Another leader talked about how charter schools often start as a family-style school, but get complicated when the leaders need to do performance reviews and meet authorizer demands.

Conversely, there were many charter school leaders who see the need for more systems and value the systems they do have in place. They see systems as motivating to teachers because the systems give them clear expectations and directions. As a charter school leader, Rita states, "And so the difficulty sometimes might be lack of systems in school. If you don't have systems, everyone is working in different directions and you don't have time to help those people. And if you overwork people, they get tired and they can't focus." Another leader talked about how every school or organization begins to rely on analytics to expand and evaluate its performance and something she sees as a natural progression or maturation of any organization.

The effect of scaling up in charter schools appears to hinge on stakeholder's expectations of working in a charter school. Many teachers struggled with some of the randomness they

experienced in evaluations and pay structures in charter schools but appreciated working in a small school where they could have a strong voice in developing and growing the school. In summary, Jane explained that charter schools are often caught in the middle of struggling to define who they are to their stakeholders:

I think the other problem is that because charter schools are non-profits and they are schools. When they want to, they use the school argument and, when they want to be innovative, we'll use the non-profit argument, but we are not a business. We are really in the business of children. So, the problem of even using the non-profit model is that, granted they might not be out for making the bottom line dollar figure, but children aren't their commodity, if you will. So any time you move go back and forth with models at convenience to get an organization to what you want it to be, it is demotivating to the director and it's demotivating to the organization because you feel like you can't be all things to all people.

Comments such as this highlight the tensions that exist in some charter schools as they develop and mature. As any bureaucracy develops and more policies guiding the school emerge organically from day to day situations, a school may be less flexible or able to innovate for individual stakeholders. In a Weberian sense, the bureaucracy might become too specialized to allow for innovation for any individual to enact innovation and the bureaucracy may protect this structure.

Charter School Leadership and Teacher Motivation

Charter school leaders come from a wide variety of diverse backgrounds and the demands on being a charter school leader can be more multifaceted than those of a traditional school principal. Some charter school leaders are community leaders who may not have been teachers and are not licensed principals, as charter schools are not currently required to have licensed administrators. However, many teachers and leaders found leadership competence was an area that affected teacher motivation. Most of the comments I heard on this topic stressed a need for competent leadership which was defined in different ways. One teacher commented on his view of having flexibility yet a need for more state oversight of charter school leaders:

For one thing, the State doesn't have enough oversight with charter schools, and a big thing is that the leadership doesn't really know what they are doing. It doesn't mean they don't have good intentions and it's important for schools to have diverse cultural groups that are involved in the school but you have to have real trained leaders.

Tony, a charter school teacher, also stated that the question of professionalism is motivating for him, but a small, family-like atmosphere in a charter school can have limitations:

We were professional at Jefferson Charter school but we were more cozy, like a family [with] more comradery. It's not like we weren't professional but you know they [traditional public school] have a superintendent, everybody is licensed so they give the façade that everyone is more professional and I have to agree on some level. That is to say, "He knows his stuff" not someone who just says "I'm running a school".

In conclusion, charter schools are free from some of the regulations regarding school leadership in traditional schools, but most of the comments I heard in my interviews stressed a need to have more qualified leaders who come from an educational field.

Additionally, in interview responses by school leaders, I heard they were very motivated by a strong sense of autonomy and freedom from bureaucracy, but also experienced challenges with this lack of support from bureaucratic systems. One leader, Rita stated:

I really love being a public charter because we can move an initiative a lot faster and actually get buy-in from the staff a lot quicker, and it's year to year. Each person, unless they perform, they won't have a contract, it's all at-will contracts. We love that and we can terminate at the end of the year, but there is that flexibility where we are not forcing anyone to stay. They stay coz they wanna stay, it's kind of a happy marriage.

Another charter leader discussed the lack of bureaucratic systems when it comes to director evaluations which can be demotivating:

I think charter schools struggle. I was just at a recent directors meeting; I think they struggle with a healthy review process with their directors. I think we struggle with good job descriptions; I think they struggle with good metrics for quality accountability. Very

often boards will go out and do surveys at the end of the school year or whatever, but I said, if I, as a director, heard some rumblings and decided to survey all the teachers and the parents, and the families and then gather that data and went back to the teacher and said, “Let’s look at your areas of strengths and weaknesses” based on survey data that is confidential, with obviously the opportunity for some strong statements one way or the other, I don’t think that the teacher would feel very confident in their value and longevity with the school. I think as you move into administration, it is somehow legitimate or acceptable to throw potshots or hand grenades that can be blown out of proportion and chew up and move through directors over and over.

In this quote, the leader is seeking a stronger bureaucratic structure to protect leaders from evaluations that might empower individual voices over the bureaucratic structure of the organization in leader evaluation systems.

Teacher Motivation in Charter Schools

Teacher self-efficacy. One of the concepts that came up in my literature review on teacher motivation was the idea of self-efficacy in teachers or the idea that teachers have the ability to directly affect student learning. Ahmad (2011) found a greater sense of task motivation when teachers felt both a personal sense of self-efficacy or confidence as well as a sense of teaching self-efficacy and the ability to directly affect student learning. Upon analysis, it is challenging to make a direct connection between what is unique to charter schools and what is considered good practice for any teacher in any school.

The role of school leadership in developing teachers’ self-efficacy was discussed in the interviews. Teachers expressed their appreciation for coaching, and many leaders saw it critical to teacher development. Some pressure that may be unique to charter schools is that teachers felt a strong sense of needing to grow and be effective or face being released from their position. One teacher, Tony, stated how his personal sense of self-efficacy has grown but he still sees charter school teachers struggle with the need to grow and be effective:

Now, confidence in my ability is important is important for motivation. Six or seven years ago, I wasn't as confident. Now, I know I'm doing my best, I'm not going to be like Jane who was always crying right before contract time. Now, they either want me or they don't, I'm doing my best. Now, I'm ok with criticism [such as], "You should try this or that". I'm ok with that dynamic.

Perhaps, since charter school teachers are usually on at-will contracts, their work towards being effective, confident teachers can be accelerated and intensified by intense pressure to 'grow or go' as some leaders have stated as well as be motivated by professional development and coaching. A charter school leader, Jane also expressed concerns about the need and challenges of developing teachers quickly in a charter school:

Professional learning is really key...so they don't say "I should suspend the kid or that's somebody else's problem or that's not why I get into the teaching profession," but I think idealism in a younger staff, too much challenge too quickly is lethal for retaining staff. It's not that they aren't capable of getting there but without resources for professional learning, it's tough and when you are a start-up, it's even harder because that kind of money is not available.

In conclusion, what seems to make the idea of self-efficacy unique to charter schools is that teachers need to develop quickly and often with fewer resources than what might be available in a traditional public school setting.

The charter school leaders I interviewed had some contrasting ideas when it came to developing a teacher's sense of self-efficacy. One leader discussed how, during a job interview, the candidate withdrew himself from consideration after hearing about the school's expectations because he did not think there was any way he would be able to live up to those expectations. Many of the leaders seemed to accept the idea that charter school teachers need to develop quickly or they will be let go. One leader, Rita, stated her expectations for teacher growth and learning:

I think in the past I used to say, I'll come and observe you and traditional teachers are really nervous about having an administrator in the classroom. Our teachers are super excited to show me best practices in the classroom but that's because I see it as "if you have growth mindset, you take this data and this is a coaching tool to help you be the best teacher possible"; however, it becomes punitive if you do nothing with this information.

Additionally, many charter school leaders believed that teacher growth and increased self-efficacy is something they have witnessed:

Rita states:

I love to see the growth. They [teachers] absolutely love it! You have someone coming fresh from college and, they are "my gosh, I have no idea what to do" and at the end of the school year I am like, "my gosh, have you been trained by me all along?!" Seriously, they were infusing best practices, responsive classroom being used, stations, differentiation, you are talking master teachers in the making!

Another leader, John, continues:

So what motivates me about working with the people I work with now is their ability to show up and ability to learn. Their ability to express concerns and then show support so that they can be successful. So, I am inviting people to come and talk with me, what concerns they have. So, what's motivating is that they actually come and ask so that we can support them. And my commitment to them is to say that for those of you who have been here for more than three years, "we need to transform this school because you've poured your time and energy into it so let's work together, hold hands, work together and do what is necessary" and so, in doing that, I'm encouraging them and showing them where we are wasting time and resources. We need to stop doing that and focus on the practices that have the highest leverage.

Both leaders and teachers are highly motivated to see teacher growth and what seems to make this unique to charter schools is the sense of urgency for that growth and self-efficacy to develop or face strong consequences.

Motivated by a Sense of Community in Charter Schools

One topic that came up in interviews was that teachers were motivated by a strong sense of community in charter schools. Many teachers commented on charter school's being smaller, being focused around a unique mission and strong collegiality. Martina discussed the importance of being part of an innovative community as a motivator:

Well, I think helping them [teachers] recognize that they are part of something, part of the cutting edge of education, that this is where innovation can be tried, where they can have the biggest impact. I always think that the kinds of people that work in charter schools are probably motivated by other things than the bottom line cash...I mean you have to have enough, but you don't have to have a BMW. It's a quality of life thing too. The relationships that you with form with kids, the relationship you form with colleagues sometimes mitigate for not being able to drive a really fancy car. I don't think that's what matters to everybody.

Strong relationships with colleagues over a shared mission was something that many charter school teachers found motivating. As previously quoted, Vincent stated he was very motivated by working with colleagues through sharing resources and supporting each other. He noted that honesty is critical with his colleagues. Solomon was also very motivated by the sense of community he saw in students and their families:

In a charter school, what did motivate me was that children in uniform were not allowed to be bullied, misbehaviors were dealt with. In a charter school, you have a bunch of parents who really want their kids in that school. The social structure is important because the kids love the school, they wanna be together, and they really wanna come back next year. So charter schools that might be failing on paper are not failing because they have a lot of students and parents that want to send their kids there.

Vincent also discussed how he felt his colleagues in his charter school "had each other's backs", and they were motivated by trust. Trust in each other and trust in the school and the approach they were using. Also, Brett, a school leader, expressed concern that the staff does have a fear of losing the sense of community they have formed, which was motivating for them:

Now, when I think about ‘fear’ I do think it exists as a motivator for us. Not fear of losing our job over bad evaluation, but more fear that we won’t be able to keep doing what we are doing, that the state or other agencies might not see the value in PPL or a shared leadership model. So we all work hard to maintain our program. It can be hard to not always show the best test results or stick to the mainstream approaches but we believe in what we are doing and believe we are helping students.

While the style and nature of the community of charter schools are incredibly diverse, building a unique sense of community is something that was motivating for many teachers and that sense of community could come from colleagues, the mission of the school, or the students and their families.

Teacher Turnover in Charter Schools

In charter schools today, one of the most often mentioned challenges facing charter schools is the high rates of turnover that have been reported. One teacher commented on the high expectations of her charter school and mentioned that if people survive the first few months, they usually stay a long time. Additionally, retaining a highly motivated teaching force in charter schools is a further challenge that has been noted repeatedly in charter school research (Renzulli, Macpherson Parrott, & Beattie, 2011; Rich, 2013; Stuit & Smith, 2012; Yeh, 2013). Some of the frequently mentioned reasons for this are high expectations and longer hours, lower pay than traditional school districts, as well as a sense many new teachers have that charter schools are a great place to gain experience but without many job protections offered by traditional districts can be seen as ‘starter schools’ (Blitz, 2011; Henwood & Featherstone, 2013).

Weber (1998) talks about how capitalism today chooses survivors through a process of “economic survival of the fittest” (p. 55). Charter schools have created a market for schooling that only existed in limited amounts previously and created a new market in a capitalistic sense. Many teachers noted that they felt pressure to achieve unrealistic academic expectations so that the school could compete in the educational market. This new paradigm of a public education market and the competitive nature caused some teachers to lose motivation when they felt like they could not compete or live up to expectations of the school leadership.

While many of these factors came up in my interviews, other factors were mentioned often as well. For my interviewees, the most often mentioned reasons for teacher turnover or retention were factors including logistics such as pay, retention strategies from leadership, retention a desire for teachers to remain part of the community, and leadership stability and presence in the charter school. In further analysis, while logistical factors were important, most respondents prefaced their comments on logistics by discussing more affective factors that affected whether they remained at the charter school or found another position. These affective factors included feeling a sense of community in the school, an affinity with the majority demographics served, healthy personal relationships with the school leaders and a strong sense of confidence in their ability be successful.

Retention Strategies from Leadership

Many charter school leaders discussed specific retention strategies they used to maintain a motivated teaching force. Richard, a school leader, discussed having interviews with all staff yearly and ended his annual interviews with a direct question to teachers about teacher retention. Richard stated:

The last question [in annual staff interviews] was, “What is one thing that will make you leave this school to want to work in another school?” The purpose was to find out what things are burdening my people and make them want to leave so I can fix them and retain our people. The goal of those questions is knowing where our people are so we can provide retention. Why? In the research we know that urban schools, high poverty schools experience high turnover because the work is so hard. There is less support, teachers are not teaching but babysitting. And many urban schools are still struggling. So asking those questions allow me to find out about my staff and do something about it.

As a leader, he utilized a very direct approach to listen to teacher voices and concerns. In his interviews, he found that the most important thing is that teachers wanted to be fulfilled in their work, followed by other common concerns such as a lack of support with student behavior issues, and pay issues where some teachers commented that they were getting offers for \$10,000 more than the charter school could afford. In many interviews, money was important, but other factors seemed to make a stronger difference in teacher retention.

Temporary Employment in Charter Schools

A concern or emotion that came up in many interviews about how charter school employment was included a sense of temporariness. Teachers felt that the yearly contract offering or lack of an offer by leadership kept them in a state of flux regarding employment and also kept them looking for the next position. Some teachers also stated that, by not having tenure or union-based job protections, there was also a sense that they could switch jobs and not face questions about that at their next interview, such as “Why didn’t you get tenure?”. Further, for some teachers, they enjoyed being able to switch positions frequently without facing negative consequences or perceptions from future employers. They saw employment in charter schools as temporary and were satisfied with that dynamic since they enjoyed being in new settings, and many commented that they enjoyed change and experiencing new things. As previously quoted, Martina saw the nature about employment in schools changing and saw different attitudes about employment. She talked about how she sees the nature of employment changing and fewer teachers are staying in the same positions for many years. She stresses that charter school teachers are on open contracts and may either be terminated or leave on their own terms. Charter school teachers seem to accept that their positions may be temporary, or at least year by year contracts, and some even seem motivated by this sense of freedom.

Many teachers saw the loss of their colleagues in charter schools as demotivating. They valued their relationships and were challenged by having to forge new working relationships with new colleagues. Vincent discussed how high levels of staff turnover affected his motivation:

I would say because of high turnover rates at charter schools I’ve worked at, it’s very hard on a teacher once that staff gets recycled almost at a 100% rate. At the schools I’ve worked at there is a 30-60% yearly turnover rate. In fact, one of the schools I worked at there was a turnover rate at over 60% within the school year. I’ve told that to board members of other schools I’ve talked to, and they are shocked with that number. The sad thing is that I don’t think that is an anomaly, I also don’t think it’s the norm, but it’s something that happens, unfortunately. So, your teachers who have been there 3, 4, 5, 6 years don’t really know anybody else on staff and so the motivation goes down, the trust

goes down, they feel like they might be next. And that has happened for me at charter schools that I love. I mean now, all of the sudden, I'm the veteran teacher there and I don't see the people that I started with, that I trained with, and I don't see the people from the last year. All the sudden you are the only returning one on your team year after year, and that's not fair to teachers, it's not fair to kids, especially.

Solomon also stated his frustrations with high levels of turnover:

Yes, I have seen it and morale was awful... 'You are doing to do your job and you're going to do it 'right' you're gonna be gone, no tenure, no protection... and 'right' means they have to pass the MCA test... so, I saw that and that doesn't work and that is one of the reasons teachers don't stay in charter schools. That's why large districts have strong unions... is because its protection... the fear, the threats it creates low morale, animosity and they don't create a spirit of collaboration.

In conclusion, teachers understood that their employment might be temporary but still experienced challenges and could lose motivation when they experienced high rates of staff turnover.

Teacher Leadership in Charter Schools as Motivator

One thing that many teachers and leaders mentioned as motivating for them to work and remain in charter schools was the ability to have a voice in leadership and pursue leadership opportunities in charter schools. For many teachers, having a voice in leadership appears to be a result of working in a smaller charter school. Skye is a teacher who is motivated by being part of a small school community:

The school I am at now - I feel like people listen to me. It hasn't always been like that. Sometimes when they get bigger, you kind of lose your voice. In a small school where you don't have a lot of teachers, I think they value you more, they value your opinion, like I went to order some textbooks for my class and just like that-I got them.

Another teacher further discussed the power of shared leadership:

That is part of the value of having a shared leadership structure. We are all owners of this school and this program. We all buy in and are responsible for the students here. Sometime with a centralized leadership structure, everything is placed on the leaders and teachers can absolve themselves of responsibility. Kind of like an antiseptic – I can wash my hands of this issue. With shared leadership, we are all responsible and it helps build a community of trust.

Additionally, many teachers appreciated having direct access to key decision makers in the charter and being able to receive immediate feedback on requests.

Many teachers discussed being respected for their knowledge and being able to pursue leadership opportunities outside the normal bureaucratic patterns. Martina shared how she has been motivated by being able to take on a variety of leadership positions:

Another thing I would say is that part of the reason I have stayed in charter schools is that my voice is heard in this school. I have been on the board, I have been on lots and lots of committees, and I know that the school leadership responds to the input of the teachers and teachers on the board. Change happens much more quickly in a charter school. Where I've worked in really big districts, where the change you might suggest is something that is not going to happen in your lifetime!

In conclusion, shared control and power was important to many teachers with whom I interviewed. For many leaders, there was more reliance on bureaucratic structures and systems to keep the organization running smoothly. There seems to be a contrast between leaders and teachers in charter schools in which leaders seem to favor more shared, family-style structures but also leaders prefer to have bureaucratic structures when it comes to some things such as teacher evaluations.

Discussion

From a Weberian viewpoint, there are some insightful findings from the interviews that would question a charter school's ability to remain in a limited bureaucratic state as well as resist

the urge to rationalize the organization for maximum efficiency at the possible expense of organic development and leadership. Charter schools were initially formed to create more innovation and autonomy, less bureaucracy, be more localized, and have teacher control. All of these areas seem to be affected by various forms of bureaucratic creep and leadership control. Perhaps this is a necessary development in a modern educational setting with our current accountability structures, but is also something that needs to be continually investigated to maintain a motivated and enthusiastic corps of charter school teachers and leaders.

The demographic appeal from most of my interviewees supports that idea that charter schools should be innovative and address ideas and concepts that may not be occurring in traditional public schools. The teachers and leaders felt a strong sense of emotional belonging that oftentimes tied back to the unique mission of the school or innovative things that were happening in the school. There was a sense of looking for alternatives to traditional education and a feeling among many of my interviewees that they were more accepted in charter schools because of their diverse work or life experiences. Many respondents seemed to enjoy career change and did not see staying in one teaching position for many years as a motivating career course.

The ability to innovate is something that appears to be continuing a strong tradition in charter schools. Both leaders and teachers commented on how they appreciated the ability to get things done and push new innovations without excessive bureaucracies to navigate. Some of the teachers felt very strongly about the innovative practices they were implementing and wanted to remain stewards of those programs. Additionally, teachers appreciated leadership support for innovation and felt this was critical to implementing and sustaining innovative approaches. Conversely, teachers also felt that the pressure to innovate or produce unrealistic outcomes could

be challenging in charter schools where job security was a concern. Also, some teachers felt pressure from state accountability sources to produce timely results from implementing innovations or face punitive measures from authorizer or state accountability systems. Some leaders also commented on a paradox of innovation in charter schools; that is, if charter schools innovate successfully, then traditional public schools tend to adopt the innovation and it becomes mainstream. This example was mentioned in the context of charter schools really pushing language immersion programs that have now caught on in many traditional school districts. In this example and others, charter schools do appear to be incubators of innovation as some of the founders of the charter school movement intended.

As innovation and systems develop, there was a wide range of effects on teacher's and leader's motivation. It makes sense that leaders might appreciate systems and policies that develop to guide the leadership of the school although some leaders did comment that the charter school began to lose some abilities to innovate as it grew and developed. For most teachers, they did not feel that the growth and development of the school hampered their ability to innovate and be creative. Conversely, I heard more negative stories about schools with unclear or underdeveloped systems that left teachers unmotivated because of unclear expectations.

For charter schools, teacher turnover has been an issue that has received some research attention and this was something teachers and leaders in my study commented on. For many teachers, there is still a notion that charter schools are a great place to get experience but many do feel a pull to a position in a traditional district that offers more benefits greater salaries and job protections. Leaders also work to provide strong feedback and support, encourage teacher leadership and infuse the mission into their discussions and work. The leaders I talked to

recognized that one of their most important roles is to maintain a motivated and inspired teaching staff.

In conclusion, it was challenging at times to differentiate teacher motivation in charter schools from teacher motivation in traditional public or any school for that matter. What I found is that charter school teachers are motivated by the demographics of the school, the mission of the school, teacher leadership opportunities and leadership support, clear job descriptions, quality systems of leadership, and an innovative and inspiring environment.

Limitations

As a qualitative, phenomenological study, I immersed myself into the lived experiences of teachers and leaders in charter schools. Validity or the level to which my participants can be generalized across charter school reform is a limitation of this study. As Creswell (1998) states, “The naturalistic researcher searches for confirmability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of the research data. Both dependability and confirmability are established through an auditing of the research process” (P. 246). A peer audit review process was used to help establish support for confirmability. My advisor and I each read and independently coded portions of interview transcripts to establish the degree to which our coding was similar. At least 90 percent of our codes were identical thereby establishing strong interrater reliability.

Another potential limitation is that participants may have feared school administrators reading the completed dissertation may recognize who the interviewees might be, which might change the teachers’ relationships with the administrators. For example, if a teacher discussed leadership actions that decreased motivation, they might have been concerned that an administrator would recognize those comments. This may have caused some participants to be overly vague to avoid identifying their schools or leaders. This is a potential threat to the

trustworthiness of the data. To support trustworthiness, participants were told that pseudonyms would be used for all participant's names and school names and attempts were made in the dissertation to not use any direct quotes that would make it possible to attribute identifiable and negative comments to specific individuals.

Generalizability is another major limitation of any research on charter schools because of the incredibly diverse nature of charter schools and teachers' experiences working in them. For example, while charter school management organizations are becoming more popular nationally, there are not common in Minnesota and I did not end up including any teachers or leaders from this subgroup in my study. Concepts such as accountability measures, teacher and leader autonomy, and job security are experienced in very diverse ways for many teachers. Additionally, how long a charter school has been open may greatly affect the systems that a school utilizes and has developed, which may affect teacher motivation. Also, all of the teachers and leaders I interviewed were from urban charter schools with a majority working with low-income populations with a larger number of English Language learners which is a unique environment in which to teach. Therefore, making generalizations from this study to other charter schools would be unwarranted.

While I uncovered some shared experiences that illuminated the unique nature of working in charter schools, teachers have diverse needs and experience motivation in many different ways. For example, for some teachers, job security was critical to maintaining high levels of motivation and encourage innovation, while other teachers in charter school were less concerned with job security. Considering the limited number of teachers I interviewed, it is not advisable to generalize teachers' motivational attributes to teachers in different regions on the United States.

To address the potential limitations in my study, I utilized a few key strategies to guard against these threats. I addressed these limitations by narrowing my research questions as I began to see research codes developing by asking my participants for feedback on the initial codes and concepts I saw developing. I also probed these participants with negative case sampling to see if there were possibilities for other concepts affecting a teacher's motivation. Another strategy I used is a peer debriefer who is outside of the world of charter school education. This peer review located my research in an alternate context to see if my codes and concepts address confirmability. Throughout the analysis, I continued to journal and analyze the data against my own bias and beliefs on motivation to maintain research that sets out to uncover knowledge and understanding rather than confirming my own experience and bias.

Recommendations Based on this Study

Although there was a lot of diversity in responses to the research questions in the interviews, the conclusions led to some strong recommendations for charter school proponents to consider when determining how to attract and retain a motivated teaching force. In most of the responses, the participants remained enthusiastic about the main charter school reform tenets such as celebrating student and staffing diversity, maintaining a unique mission focus, reducing bureaucratic barriers to innovation and continuing to understand teachers and leaders needs within an innovative and work environment that remains flexible when addressing student needs.

Live the Mission

Charter schools are typically founded around a unique focus and this is something on which leaders need to maintain a strong focus for living the mission to retain motivated teachers. A strong majority of the teachers in my study reported the cultural group and focus of the school as the main reason they are working there. If there is a lack of focus on the mission and culture

of the school, teachers may begin to feel alienated and disappointed from they expected to be doing.

Also, the charter school mission should be something that the leaders of the school build around and keep in the forefront of daily activities. Many teachers commented on how they felt dedicated to the school because of the mission and the students they were serving and was motivating for them. This sense of community for the teachers can erode as the school grows in size and demographics and lose the sense of family that is important for many teachers in this study. Many teachers commented on the strong affective or emotional factors that led them to feel part of the charter school community and this all centered on the mission of the school.

Conversely, charter schools must also remain inclusive to all demographic groups to remain effective. Some teachers commented on how certain demographic groups would not likely enroll in certain schools because they would not feel welcome. While the school might want to focus on an underprivileged or represented cultural group and create a safe place for that group, this can have a negative impact on students and teachers when the school mission or cultural focus is implemented in a way that feels restrictive or not inclusive other demographic groups who may not be directly in line with the mission. Both teachers and leaders agreed that diversity among the students and school staff is good for students and the health of the charter school over all.

Maintain a Spirit of Innovation

While my study produced some varied responses and comments related to innovation, most teachers and leaders appreciated their ability to innovate in charter schools. This was one of the founding premises of charter schools and charter schools need to promote and empower a sense of innovation and entrepreneurialism with their leaders and teachers. Charter schools, as

they mature, need to guard against bureaucratic creep to maintain a motivated teaching force since many leaders and teachers choose to work in charter schools because they crave working in an innovative environment. One caveat related to innovation is that leaders need to understand that innovation is not an excuse for not having a program or materials or for simply forcing teachers to do things on their own or learn as they go. For example, one teacher who seeking more curriculum resources was told by a Charter School Director that he/she needed to create his/her own materials to be innovative. The teacher felt like this was just an excuse to save money or not invest in the teacher's professional development. Also, innovation can feel unprofessional when it is not backed up by research on best practices and implemented with fidelity. High performing teachers can lose motivation if they feel they are working in a unprofessional environment where anything goes.

Additionally, teachers feeling overwhelmed with all the work and expected duties in charters schools was something that teachers mentioned as being demotivating and led to seek other, more manageable teaching positions. Charter schools need to be thoughtful in implementing innovation in terms of how much, when and who will lead and evaluate the innovations.

Support Teacher Leadership

In addition to being innovative, charter schools should also encourage teacher leadership since this is important to many charter school teachers. The teachers in my study wanted to be involved in decision making, have a voice in the leadership of the school and have opportunities to pursue formal leadership positions within the charter school. These opportunities keep the teachers invested in the school and in the growth of the school. Again, as with being innovative, teachers did not appreciate being forced to take on leadership duties because of leadership

pressure. Teacher leadership in Charter Schools should be an option and promoted by school leadership, but not be a requirement or an unpaid extra duty.

Match Accountability Goals to the Mission and Demographics

Charter school leadership should also work with authorizer and state accountability systems to reflect both the mission of the school and results of the school. Many teachers in my study were urban, large city teachers where many of their students were below grade level, living in poverty or English learners. Some teachers commented on how it can be demotivating when leaders seem to only focus on achieving grade level proficiency or in the case of Minnesota, passing the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs). Teachers wanted to also look at measures of student growth as well as other measures such as social and emotional learning. Charter schools need to work to match their accountability measures to the demographics as well as the mission of the school. The teachers in these urban charter schools were committed to the work but also wanted to be held accountable to the growth of their students as well as their student's target proficiency levels. This is an area where charter school leaders need to work with the states and authorizers to establish accountability measures that recognize the hard work of teachers in schools serving all demographic groups and not giving a weighted measure or perception to academic proficiency only.

Challenge the 'Starter School' Mindset

Charter schools need to move beyond the perceptions of being 'starter schools' to retain great teachers. In addition to seeking equitable funding at the state level for charter schools, Charter school leadership needs to find creative ways to provide resources to teachers. Some teachers mentioned flexible schedules, increased classroom support and quality curriculum resources as things that helped them grow and develop. Another thing leaders and teachers need

to do well is provide coaching and professional development. High performing teachers crave good quality feedback and are motivated by being excellent teachers. Again, charter school teachers should have a voice in professional development to target areas of need rather than top down initiatives with no teacher input. Many teachers commented on how they valued the training, coaching and evaluations they received in charter schools and this helped them commit to development as well as to remaining in the charter school long term.

Logistically, leaders need to focus on training and developing teachers for a long-term career in the charter school. Leaders should be focused on retaining teachers while some teachers in my study felt that some leaders were focused on a fast-paced, competitive charter school environment where high rates of turnover were acceptable and, at times, seemed desirable to leaders. Further, many teachers also felt demotivation when they saw their valued colleagues leaving, either voluntarily or involuntarily. One teacher at a school with high turnover felt like he was a loser because he was one of longest tenured teachers. Charter School leaders need to accept the challenges of having high expectations and demanding high results in an environment where most teachers are on at-will contracts and have very little formal job protections.

Balanced Logistics

While many charter school teachers and leaders appreciate the diverse and wide-ranging job scope of working in a charter school, logistics must be balanced to retain highly motivated charter school teachers. Charter schools need to address inequities in pay in creative ways such as using flex days, giving teachers choices in additional duties and providing unique opportunities to supplement income through extra duties or extended hours. Charter schools and leaders need to balance the unique demands of working in smaller schools with the need to have a work life balance that is manageable for the long-term sustainability of the staff.

Charter schools also need to maintain a stable leadership structure that includes a strong board, strong school and teacher leadership structures. Teachers lost motivation in schools when there was continual change in leadership and they had to work with new leaders with new expectations. Changes will also need to be made with leadership, but the leaders should focus on developing leaders for long-term stability. Frequent leadership changes further add to the idea that charter schools are short term positions or ‘starter schools’ and this can have a negative impact on retaining high performing teachers.

Respecting Leadership Leverage

Most of the leaders in my study enjoyed the increased leadership leverage they had or in charter schools and the ability to get things done. Working with a less restrictive bureaucratic structure is an important concept in charter school reform. Having said that, it is important that leaders respect this power and continually reflect on their leadership and its effects on teachers. In my interviews, there was a perceived difference about the use of fear by the leaders and teachers. No leaders claimed to use fear, such as a teacher losing their position or the school closing if certain accountability was not met, but many teachers experienced these fears in their work. Teachers experienced feeling fear as something that eventually wore them down and led them to consider leaving the charter school. Leaders need to motivate teachers by providing inspirational leadership, focusing on the mission, providing quality coaching and professional development and focusing on the students and their learning.

Suggestions for Future Research

I believe this research and the concept of teacher motivation is critical for charter schools as they develop. I also believe there are many areas of research that could be addressed in subsequent studies. One way to work with this concept is to focus on different types of charter

schools such as immersion programs cultural focus schools or subject-specific schools. Different demographics of students and families are attracted to diverse schools, so these may need to be researched individually to draw stronger conclusions. For example, parent involvement and expectations vary greatly among different demographic groups of parents and this can have a major impact on teacher and leader motivation. Additionally, focusing on teacher motivation in larger charter school networks compared to individual charter schools may produce some interesting contrasts in experiences.

Also, I found the concept of teacher motivation was incredibly diverse and future studies could focus more on a few general concepts of motivation and conduct research on how teachers are experiencing these concepts. Some current theories, such as the use of external incentives, or instilling the idea that one's ability to control an outcome in any situation could be used exclusively to obtain more focused research results.

Another recommendation might be to focus in on what is currently unique about charter schools. Again, this is a challenge since charter schools are so diverse in demographics, size and scope, but this would be another way to narrow the focus of teacher motivation. Focusing on what is currently unique could address the theory of charter school reform as well as the current experiences of charter school teachers and leaders.

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Appendix A

Teacher Interview Guide

What affective or emotional factors influenced your decision to apply to teach in the charter school? Were you drawn to the specific mission of the school or demographic group enrolled in the school? Anything else?

What was your reason for applying and teaching at a charter school as opposed to teaching at a traditional public school or other type of school?

What do you find motivating about teaching the students you work with? What are the main challenges in teaching these students? How did or does school leadership respond to these challenges?

What do you find motivating about working with colleagues at this school? Does the school provide time for collaboration? Do the leaders expect high levels of collaboration and support this?

How do the leaders of the school evaluate you as a teacher?

How has the teaching and school staff changed in demographics since you have been at this school?

How do the logistics of the school (school hours, outside of teaching obligations, pay, benefits) affect your motivation to teach? How has the school leaders responded to issues in logistics?

How has student achievement affected your motivation as a teacher?

Please describe your current thoughts about what motivates you to teach at this school? Please describe some times when you experience high levels of motivation? Please describe some times when you have experienced low levels of motivation?

Can you describe some specific things a leader has done that you found motivating? Can you describe some things that a leader has done that were not motivating?

Please describe the most motivating teaching position that you can imagine? How would you describe leadership in this idealized position?

Do you see your teaching position in a charter school as a long-term career option? Explain.

Appendix B

School Leader Interview Guide

What factors influenced your decision to lead a charter school? Have you been a leader in a traditional school? If so, what are some differences?

Does the mission of the school appeal to you personally?

What do you find motivating as a charter school leader?

What type of accountability measures are you held accountable for? Who do you report to? Do you feel these measures are reasonable for your charter school?

What are some of the main challenges you face in motivating or creating the conditions for motivated teaching staff?

How does the board evaluate you as a leader?

How do logistics such as schedule, pay, contracts, lack of tenure, affect your motivation to lead a charter school?

What are the most motivating parts of your day as a charter school leader?

Do you consider leading in a charter school a long-term career path or do you see yourself leading a traditional public school at some point in the future?

Can you describe your ideal leadership conditions?

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

A Description of How Charter School Leadership Affects Teacher Motivation

I am conducting a dissertation study about charter school leadership and teacher motivation. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because of your experience as a teacher or leader in a charter school. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Brad Tipka

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to learn more about charter school leadership and how this leadership affects teacher motivation. Charter school leadership presents unique challenges in regard to retaining teachers and maintaining high levels of teacher motivation. This study will seek to understand the aspects of charter school leadership that enable and maintain high levels of teacher motivation which ultimately help to understand how charter schools can remain effective and sustainable institutions.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to meet and allow me to audio record a 45-60 minute interview. You will not be asked to provide names of schools or specific individuals within those schools. We will meet at an agreed upon location which will provide some privacy.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks. First, this topic and study will include discussions of current and former school leaders. Second, portions of these data may be used in a published study of this

topic and would be publicly available. Therefore, there is a slight risk of a current or former colleague or leader recognizing themselves in the study. To minimize the risk:

- 1) You will be asked to not use formal names of individuals or schools pseudonyms will be used.
- 2) You will be able to decline to answer any questions.
- 3) You may decline to continue the interview at any time.
- 4) You may decide to destroy any data related to certain questions, and I will not use that data in any future published documents.
- 5) You may decide to withdraw completely from the study, and I will destroy the data.

There are no direct benefits in this study.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation for the participants.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include recorded interviews, written transcripts of these interviews, and an analysis of these interviews. I will maintain these records and share aspects of them with fellow students and my professor at the University of St. Thomas. They will be stored in my possession on my computer and I will have sole access to the originals. The records will be deleted at the completion of my doctoral research on this topic.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with any current or former employers or the University of St. Thomas. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you, I will not use the data. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Brad Tipka. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 612-590-6540. The University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board can be reached at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns you may have.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I consent to allowing interviews to be audio recorded.

_____	_____
Signature of Study Participant	Date

Print Name of Study Participant

_____	_____
Signature of Researcher	Date